

BURNING QUESTIONS.

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OF

THE LIFE THAT NOW IS,

AND OF

THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

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I.

HAS EVOLUTION ABOLISHED GOD ?

Let us take the sphere of Science—that is, of the knowledge of the physical world, which is chiefly in men's minds when they speak of science. Must we not admit that the discoveries which have been made in it have been to us real revelations or unveilings of God, and that their spiritual results have been of very great value? The immutability of His will is shown in the reign of law, so that a lawless scepticism is rendered all but impossible. The true position of man is also made clear, so that a check is placed upon wilfulness and presumption.

—CANON FREMANTLE.

What you want is not a system which may be adjusted to theism, nor even one which finds its most reasonable interpretation in theism, but one which theism only can account for. That, it seems to me, you have. An excellent judge, a gifted adept in physical science and exact reasoning, the late Clerk Maxwell, is reported to have said, not long before he left the world, that he had scrutinised all the agnostic hypotheses he knew of, and that they one and all needed a God to make them workable.—ASA GRAY.

I.

HAS EVOLUTION ABOLISHED GOD ?

IN one of Mrs. Browning's most striking lyrics she puts into verse the voice of that great cry which is said to have swept over the earth at the moment of the crucifixion of our Lord, when the ancient mythologies, as if smitten by lightning from heaven, yielded up the ghost, crying :

“Great Pan is dead !”
And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy,
And eternity's despair ;
And they heard the words it said,
“Pan is dead—Great Pan is dead—
Pan, Pan is dead.”

The old nature-worship, vanquished by the clearer light that shone from Bethlehem and Calvary, shrank dismayed and palsied to the earth from which it sprang. It was the end

of one era of religious history and the beginning of another.

There are those living on the earth to-day who think that they have heard a similar cry, only this time it proclaims that the Christ is dead and that Great Pan is alive again. The belief is entertained by some that we have come to the end of that period of religious history which commenced about nineteen hundred years ago in Palestine; that the force which then began to shape the world's destinies is now practically spent; and that a religion—if we may call it a religion—not unlike that of which the gods of Hellas were the representatives—a nature-cult—is now, in its turn, to dethrone Christianity, and resume that empire over the Western world of which it has so long been despoiled. In some quarters with exultation, and in others with alarm, this outcry is heard. It is thought by some and feared by many that the religious beliefs which have been regarded throughout Christendom as most fundamental, have been undermined by recent discoveries in physical science; it is loudly said that Christianity is doomed, and that the Churches must give place to other

forms of social organisation,—to societies for ethical culture, perhaps; or to clubs for the study of science or art; or to guilds of labourers or traders. The extent to which this impression prevails I will not try to estimate; beyond question it is widespread. It may, therefore, be useful to examine the facts out of which it springs; to see how much reason there is for the expectation that the religious beliefs in which we have been reared from our childhood are about to be set aside as exploded superstitions. It is of the utmost consequence that we know the truth about this matter. If these beliefs of ours are exploded superstitions, the sooner we rid ourselves of them the better. If, on the other hand, they are as valid as ever they were, our disregard of them would prove fatal to our characters and our happiness.

The discourses that follow will be devoted to a discussion of some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as they appear under the light of modern science. The author lays no claim to any profound knowledge either of natural science or of theology; but it does not require the learning of a Dorner or the genius

of a Faraday to detect the fallacies with which the reasonings of modern disbelief are thickly sown. The cavils by which faith is paralysed are often very shallow ; and the most confident assaults of destructive criticism are made upon positions that were long ago abandoned. If this can be made plain, many difficulties will disappear, and the burden of proof for the Christian believer will be sensibly lightened.

The fundamental question of religion is generally assumed to be the question of the existence of God. I doubt whether this inquiry logically comes first ; but for the purposes of this discussion it matters little in what order our topics be taken ; we will, therefore, follow the popular rather than the logical order.

The Christian doctrine teaches us that the Universe has an Author ; that the Author of the Universe is an infinite Spirit ; that we rightly conceive of Him not merely as Force,

but as Intelligence and Will; that He is our Heavenly Father. This is the clear word of Christ Himself; the lofty monotheism of the Hebrews received its confirmation and its crown in the Sermon on the Mount.

This doctrine of God is the answer which Christianity gives to the question of origins with which every human being confronts the Universe. "How came it to be?" we cry, as we look upon the world and all things therein, and upon the innumerable worlds and systems circling through space? The simple but sublime reply of our religion is given in the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Other answers have been given. "It came by chance," says the atheist. "The matter of which the universe is constituted has eternally existed. No man knows how it began to be, or whence it came. The atoms of which it is composed are endowed, nobody knows how or by whom, with certain motions; and in flying about through space, they have hit against each other, and stuck together, forming masses of matter, and gradually shaping themselves into rocks, crys-

tals, plants, crustaceans, fishes, birds, beasts, and human beings. Out of this fortuitous concourse of atoms have come the beauty of the rose, the grace of the gazelle, the strength of the lion ; out of it has come the human form, miscalled divine—"the Lord Christ's heart and Plato's brain." It is all chance ; there is no superintending intelligence ; there is no evidence of a Creator or Ruler of Nature." I will not stop long to confute this coarse atheism, because the simple statement of it carries its own confutation to most intelligent persons, and because it is not the form in which the scientific doubt of the present day finds expression. There are few among our great scientists or philosophers who do not strongly repudiate all such assertions as these. If Feuerbach is heard saying, "It is clear as the sun and evident as the day that there is no God and still more that there can be none ;" and if Flourens still more violently cries, "Hatred of God is the beginning of wisdom ;" and if Von Holbach declares the existence of God to be, "not a problem, but simply an impossibility," the greater thinkers, like Tyndall and Darwin, and Herbert Spencer

and Helmholtz, and Lotze, and Dubois-Reymond, look gravely at one another and say, "This is not science; this is rant and cant; when people talk like this they are overstepping all the bounds of knowledge and probability, and making assertions for which they have no warrant whatever." "Whatever may be the difficulty of proving that there *is* a God," says the late Professor Diman," to prove that there *is not* a God is manifestly beyond the power of human intellect. That God exists is a proposition the truth of which may be deduced from a circle of facts lying within our immediate range; but to prove that God does not exist we must have sounded the universe in all its length and breadth. If He has left no traces of His existence in the narrow field open to our inspection, we yet cannot affirm that no such trace exists in the measureless space which we have never explored; if He has never uttered a voice during the brief space that we have existed, we still cannot declare with certainty that He has never revealed Himself to other beings during the eternal round of time."* It is usually difficult to prove a

* "The Theistic Argument," p. 332.

negative ; but the proof of such a negative as this would be a preposterous enterprise. No man who was entirely sane would ever venture upon it.

Of the great scientists of the present time, those who are not believers are not deniers. None of them say that there is no God ; but some of them say that we do not know and cannot know whether there is a God or not. These are not atheists ; they are agnostics. To the great question of origins their answer is, " We do not know."

This does not, in fact, involve any radical change in the attitude of science towards religious truth, although it may seem to do so. It has not been supposed, by the acutest Christian philosophers, that a scientific demonstration of the being of God was possible. The most famous treatise upon the evidences of Christianity is Butler's "Analogy"; and that treatise does not attempt to demonstrate the existence of God ; it only shows the reasons which make God's existence highly probable. Butler began his career as a philosopher by a masterly criticism of Dr. Samuel Clarke's attempted "Demonstration of the Being and

Attributes of God." Most conclusively did Butler show that no such demonstration was possible. And in the conclusion of the argument of his "Analogy" he says: "*Those who believe* will here find the scheme of Christianity cleared of objections; and the evidence of it in a peculiar manner strengthened; those who do not believe will at least be shown the absurdity of all attempts to prove Christianity false; the plain, undoubted *credibility* of it, and, I hope, a good deal more."

It is true, however, that some of the defenders of the faith have undertaken to furnish scientific proofs from the natural world of the being of God; and that the recent discoveries of modern science seem to have weakened the force of these proofs. Especially is this true of that argument from design which was so elaborately set forth by Paley in his "Natural Theology." You remember his famous illustration of the watch found in the field; his assertion of the questionless inference we should draw when we came to examine it, and perceived its structure and its uses, that it was the work of some designing mind; and his claim that many of the objects discovered in

nature—as, for example, the eye—bear marks of design as clear as those which the watch affords; that if we confidently affirm the watch to have had an intelligent author, we may with equal confidence make the same affirmation respecting the eye and multitudinous other wonderful objects in nature. This argument, which was long regarded as a very cogent one, has, it is supposed, been completely overthrown by the theory of evolution, which shows us the development of the eye, for example, through various stages; which asserts and seems to prove that the human eye was not contrived outright, as the watchmaker contrives a watch, but that it is the result of centuries of gradual evolution, the first organ of vision being, perhaps, some spot on the surface of an oyster, or on some other rudimentary living creature, which was sensitive to the light; that this sensitive spot gradually became more sensitive; that by the action of the light upon this “optic nerve simply coated with pigment,” a pupil was formed, little by little, natural selection perpetuating those variations of this structure which were most favourable to vision, until at

last there resulted "an optical instrument as perfect as is possessed by any member of the great Articulate Class." Having got as far as this, it is easy enough to go the rest of the way when we learn from Mr. Darwin that "in the most highly organised division of the animal kingdom, namely, the Vertebrata, we can start from an eye so simple that it consists, as in the lancelet, of a little sack of transparent skin, furnished with a nerve and lined with pigment, but destitute of any other apparatus." Upon such a basis, he tells us, the work of development can go on until the human eye is produced. "We must suppose," he says, "each new state of the instrument to be multiplied by the million; each to be preserved until a better one is produced, and then the old ones to be all destroyed. In living bodies, variation will cause the slight alterations, generation will multiply them almost indefinitely, and natural selection will pick out with unerring skill each improvement. Let this process go on for millions of years, and during each year on millions of individuals of many kinds; and may we not believe that a living optical instrument might thus be formed,

as superior to those of glass as the works of the Creator are to those of man?" *

Thus the evolutionary theory seems to cut the ground from under the argument from design. "These curious and marvellous things that you have pointed out to us in nature," say some of the evolutionists, "were not contrived and manufactured, as you seem to think; they were gradually developed, under the operation of a law of nature, whose workings we can show you." Mr. Huxley puts that case thus, in one of his "Lay Sermons":

"In Paley's famous illustration, the adaptation of all the parts of the watch to the function or purpose of showing the time is held to be evidence that the watch was specially contrived to that end; on the ground that the only cause we know of, competent to produce such an effect as a watch which shall keep time, is a contriving intelligence adapting the means directly to that end.

"Suppose, however, that any one had been able to show that the watch was not made directly by any person, but that it was the

* "Origin of Species," pp. 179—181.

result of the modification of another watch which kept time but poorly; and that this again had proceeded from a structure which could hardly be called a watch at all, seeing that it had no figures on the dial, and the hands were rudimentary; and that going back and back in time, we came at last to a revolving barrel, as the earliest traceable rudiment of the whole fabric. And imagine that it had been possible to show that all these changes had resulted, first, from a tendency of the structure to vary indefinitely; and secondly, from something in the surrounding world which helped all variations in the direction of an accurate timekeeper and checked all those in other directions; then it is obvious that the force of Paley's argument would be gone." *

This is the answer which evolutionism—(I use the word advisedly; for it is evolution as an *ism* rather than evolution as a scientific theory that opposes religion)—makes to the argument which infers creative intelligence from objects in nature. To my own mind this answer is much less crushing than it is some-

* "Lay Sermons," p. 330.

times supposed to be. Mr. Huxley thinks it obvious that if the supposition which he makes were a fact, "the force of Paley's argument would be gone." I do not think it would affect the cogency of the real argument at all. What the argument tries to prove is that the watch indicates thought and purpose. Proving that it has come into its present form as the result of a long process, instead of being constructed outright by the hands of an artificer, does not cancel these indications of intelligence or purpose. Suppose we could go back and back in time, to the "revolving barrel" out of which the watch had been evolved; should we then have got beyond the signs and proofs of intelligence? How about that revolving barrel? Is that a thoughtless product? Does that need no explanation? Who made the barrel? Who caused it to revolve? Who gave it its tendency to vary—(not "indefinitely," by the way)—and, above all, who is responsible for that "*something in the surrounding world which helped all its variations in the direction of an accurate timekeeper and checked all those in other directions*"? Is there no note of intelligence in all this

wonderful process—no indication of an end in view—no trace of a presiding purpose that shapes this age-long development?

It seems to me that this discovery of the origin of watches would deepen our conviction of intelligence and purpose; and, in the same way, it seems to me that Mr. Darwin's theory of the evolution of the eye furnishes a proof of intelligence far more impressive than any that Paley ever dreamed of. "When," says Professor Diman, "we consider the marvellous structure of the eye and realise that it has been gradually produced by organising forces which have fashioned it through *the agency of complex organs working harmoniously toward this one result*, we have a much more complicated problem presented than in the case of simple mechanism." * And the more complicated the problem the greater the need of intelligence for its solution.

Indeed, Mr. Huxley's notion that by "going back and back" we get rid of our reasons for believing that intelligence and purpose are manifested in the creation seems to me a curious bit of reasoning. If Professor Huxley

* "The Theistic Argument," p. 184.

had lived when the old cosmogony was in vogue—that which made the world a huge four-cornered plane resting on the backs of four elephants—he would have objected to it. “That is not so,” the Professor would have said. “That is an unscientific theory. For investigation proves that the elephants stand on turtles, and the turtles are upheld by vast sea-serpents, and the sea-serpents repose on monstrous star-fish, and the star-fish lie on the backs of immense jelly-fishes, and if you go back and back or down and down you will get to a place where it is so dark that you cannot see what the jelly-fishes do rest on. It is scientifically demonstrated, therefore, that they rest on nothing.” And then, I suppose, the Professor would have imagined that he had furnished an account of the foundations of the earth in which the inquisitive mind of man could repose without further questioning. I doubt the sufficiency of such an exposition. For the fact is that all the going back and back, and down and down, that science has been able to do has never taken the open-eyed explorer for one moment beyond the regions where Thought is supreme and Purpose rules.

It is sometimes supposed that Mr. Darwin's theory of development denies purpose in the creation, and thus leaves no room for belief in a Creator. And although Mr. Darwin himself speaks reverently of the Creator, and assumes, indeed, that the original germs, out of which all the marvellous life of the universe has been developed, received their existence and their powers from the Creator, yet he sometimes uses language by which the agency of the Creator seems to be excluded from the whole evolutionary process. But it is not difficult to show that when Mr. Darwin speaks in this way he is using language poetically, metaphorically, not scientifically. And so far as Darwinism has become atheistic it has reached that result by hardening Mr. Darwin's metaphors into dogmas—a trick with which theologians are very familiar indeed.

What is the peculiar theory of evolution to which Mr. Darwin's name is given? It is the theory which explains the origin of species by natural selection. It rests on three great laws: variation, heredity, the survival of the fittest.

All living things multiply very rapidly, and

their progeny are not all like the parents, but differ more or less from their parents and from one another. Plant a kernel of maize, and two or three ears may grow upon the stalk; and the several hundred kernels found upon these ears are not all exactly like the parent kernel in form, size, weight, colour, but vary considerably among themselves. The chickens of a single brood are not all just like their parent, and no two of them are exactly alike; there is much variety among them; some are larger and stronger than others, and the differences may occur in wings, legs, comb, bill, or any other part of the body. This is the first great fact of Darwinism—the fact of variation.

The second is the fact of heredity—that there is, in spite of this variability, a tendency on the part of each individual to transmit his peculiarities to his offspring. Between these two opposing tendencies—in a sort of rhythmical vibration—the great process of development moves on. Offspring *may* be unlike their parents; but they are likely to resemble their parents, in the main. If an individual comes into life with any marked peculiarity, as the result of the law of variation, he may

and probably will, by the law of heredity, transmit that peculiarity to his offspring.

Now, as species multiply so rapidly, multitudes of living things must perish. From the stump of the single chestnut tree that has been cut down fifty sprouts start up. These cannot all live. There cannot be fifty chestnut trees standing on this ground where there was one. There can be but one. The sprouts will grow together for a while, but gradually the one that is most vigorous and hardiest will overtop the rest, and cast them into the shadow, taking from them the light and air and moisture, killing them off, finally, and absorbing their substance into its own life. This is the law of the survival of the fittest. And Mr. Darwin shows that, in the struggle for existence, any individual which comes into the world with some peculiarity which gives it an advantage over its fellows is enabled to survive at their expense, and to transmit this victorious peculiarity to its offspring, and that thus species are formed, as the result of what he calls natural selection.

Now it is evident that the first great fact in this process is the fact of variation. How does

this variation take place? Mr. Darwin sometimes says that it is indefinite—that is to say, the offspring may differ in any possible or imaginable way from its parent; it is all luck and chance; there is no law about it. But if that were true, the law of heredity, on which he depends for the transmission of his favourable variations, would be no law. It is not true that organisms vary indefinitely. “A whale,” says Professor Huxley, “does not tend to vary in the direction of producing feathers, nor a bird in the direction of producing whale-bone.” Again, the same authority declares that “it is quite conceivable that every species tends to produce varieties of *a limited number and kind* ;” and Dr. Asa Gray confirms this supposition, as a probable fact. If, now, variation is not indefinite and haphazard, if it is subject to a law of limitation, that very fact implies intelligence and purpose. All the indications are that there are certain “predetermined lines of modification,” between which natural selection does its work. The process is not fortuitous, it is under guidance. Variation is under law, a law impressed upon the organism itself; and inheritance is subject to

law, the law that like produces like ; and both these laws are the signs of intelligence and purpose.

At any rate, there is room here, even under the theory of Darwinism as expounded by its ablest defenders, for the work of a creative intelligence.*

The more we question Nature, the more deeply we pry into her secrets, the more amazed we are to find the marks of mind over all her works. Go back, if you will, past all the wonders of the organic and inorganic world—past the marvellous forms of animal life and plant life, and the splendid fabrics of the crystals, to the very first product of the plastic force of Nature, the molecules, and what do you find them to be? You find them, as Sir John Herschel said, “possessing all the characteristics of manufactured articles.” These molecules are not fortuitous combinations of atoms ; as Dr. Bascom says, they are “definite masses with an exact numerical relation and constitution of atoms. The most careful

* On all this see “The Ethics of Darwinism,” by Professor J. G. Schurman, whose acute argument is here greatly condensed.

structure of brown stone is not so precise in the number, relation, and dimensions of its blocks, as molecules, the first terms in matter, in their atomic formation. The molecules or ultimate masses in each homogeneous substance are identical in structure; they contain the same number of atoms disposed in precisely the same relations of affinity. . . . In this numerical construction and numerical identity of molecules, as expressed in atoms, we have simple mathematical foundations of thought in all the forms of matter. The world has been put together in its first constituents arithmetically.”*

In the structure of the watch or of the eye there are hardly clearer marks of intelligence, of purpose, than in the constitution of the molecules—the primary masses into which matter is combined. The fact that these molecules are put together mathematically is the very foundation of chemistry. Thus our science when it goes back and back and down and down brings us to the most startling indications of thought and purpose in the lowest forms of matter. Any one who thinks that

* “Natural Theology,” pp. 88, 89.

the discoveries of science have banished from the universe the traces of mind, shows a very dim apprehension of the discoveries of science. And the theory of evolution makes the universe no less wonderful, no less divine than it was before, but rather more. It does not explain existence; it tells us nothing about how the matter that is built up into these wonderful organisms came to be; it only tells us how this matter reached its present forms.

Mr. Darwin's theory, as you know, respects the origin of species. He does not try to explain the origin of matter, nor even the origin of life. He finds matter existing and life existing, and tries to explain only how the living things round about us came to have their present forms. He believes that animal life, including the physical nature of man, is traceable to a few primordial germs, and he endeavours to show how; but the existence of these marvellous germs, out of which all this has been developed, is to him as much of a mystery as it is to you and me. "There is a grandeur," he says, and these are the last words of his most famous book, "in this view of life, with its several powers having been

originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, while this planet has gone circling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.”*

Mr. Darwin's way of explaining this process removes none of the mystery of the origin and adds new mystery to the process. “Creation by fabrication,” as Professor Diman says, “seems less wonderful than creation by evolution; a man can bring a machine together; he cannot make a machine that develops itself. That our harmonious universe should formerly have existed potentially in the state of diffused matter, without form, and that it should gradually have attained its present organisation, is much more marvellous than its formation according to the artificial method supposed by the vulgar would be. Those who consider it legitimate to argue from phenomena to noumena have good right to maintain that the nebular hypothesis implies a primary Cause as superior to the mechanical god of Paley as that is to the fetish of the savage. So that, whatever

* “The Origin of Species.”

ground we may have for believing in a First Cause, or an intelligent First Cause, that ground is not in the slightest degree impaired by the doctrine of evolution.”*

So, indeed, all the greater scientists and philosophers clearly admit. Mr. Darwin never denies God; Mr. Tyndall once in a melancholy mood intimated that possibly the hypothesis of deity was superfluous, but he made haste to retract, and to declare that in his happier moments his faith was stronger; while many of the most illustrious scientific men of the present day are clear confessors of theistic faith. There are few men now living whose word on a matter of this kind is entitled to more weight than that of Mr. John Fiske, to whom Mr. Darwin himself once wrote, “I never in my life read so lucid an expositor, and therefore thinker, as you are.” Mr. Fiske is justly regarded as the most able teacher of the doctrines of Darwin and Spencer now living, yet Mr. Fiske in his *Essay on Darwinism*, uses these words:

“Darwinism may convince us that the existence of highly complicated organisms is the

*“The Theistic Argument,” p. 176.

result of an infinitely diversified aggregate of circumstances so minute as severally to seem trivial or accidental; yet the consistent theist will always occupy an impregnable position in maintaining that the entire series, in each and every one of its incidents, is an immediate manifestation of the creative action of God." *

That is the last, the sanest, and the strongest word that evolution has to speak respecting the fundamental truth of religion.

This modern science which has been supposed by some persons to have banished God from the universe, has not, then, banished order from the universe; it has given us revelations of the order and system which pervades the whole far more impressive than our fathers ever saw. It has not banished purpose from the universe. For though it has set aside that somewhat childish notion of design in nature which Paley unfolded, it has opened to us vistas far down the ages, and has shown us how an increasing purpose runs through them all, shaping the issues of organic life with Divine patience and unwearied power. Nature as Paley saw it exhibited intelligence,

* "Darwinism, and Other Essays," p. 7.

order, purpose. Therefore he believed in an intelligent Creator. Nature as Darwin saw it, exhibits a grander order, a more far-reaching and comprehensive purpose. Why, then, should we cease to believe in an intelligent Creator?

I was present three or four years ago at an ecclesiastical council, at which a young man of somewhat remarkable learning and acumen was being examined preparatory to his ordination to the work of the ministry. "What do you think," asked one of the ministers, "of Paley's argument for the existence of God?" "It was very well, in its time," was the answer; "but the proofs of intelligence and purpose in the creation that have been shown us by such men as Darwin and Tyndall and Herbert Spencer are so much ampler and more convincing than those presented by Paley, that his arguments seem weak and inadequate." The good brethren looked at one another in amazement. They had not a word to say. Were not these the names of the men everywhere denounced as the foes of religion? And here they were quoted as its chief witnesses. Yet, astonishing as the utterance

seemed, it was strictly true. That these men have had any purpose of confirming the truth of religion I do not say; some of them seem to have had a contrary purpose; but they have builded better than they knew; and the facts that they have gathered and set in order, and the natural laws that they have discovered and declared, bear witness in a wonderful way to the Being of Him whom we call God, and worship.

The theory of evolution has met with the same fate that many another doctrine, now believed by all the world, encountered when it was first proclaimed. The Copernican theory brought down on the heads of all who espoused it a storm of censure;—was not the doctrine essentially atheistic? good people all demanded. You know what they did with Galileo for teaching it. And how shocked the learned Council of Salamanca was when Columbus stood up before them to broach his theory of a passage round the world. “At the very threshold of the discussion,” Irving tells us, “instead of geographical objections, Columbus was assailed with citations from the Bible and the Testament; the book of Genesis,

the Psalms of David, the Prophets, the Epistles and the Gospels. . . . Doctrinal points were mixed up with philosophical discussions; and a mathematical demonstration was allowed no weight if it appeared to clash with a text of Scripture or a commentary of one of the fathers."* Augustine had pronounced the doctrine of antipodes heretical; because if there were inhabitants on the other side of the earth they could not have descended from Adam—how could they have crossed the intervening ocean? To teach this doctrine, therefore was flatly to contradict the Holy Bible, which says that all men descended from Adam.

Sir Isaac Newton's theory of gravitation was assailed at the outset for the same reason. Pious men insisted that it put God out of the universe. The hypothesis of a universal and omnipresent law seemed to them to leave no room for God. It was an atheistic theory.

The geological account of the origin of the earth raised exactly the same outcry within the memory of many who are now living.

It is not wonderful, then, that the theory

* "Columbus," i. 62.

which explains creation as an orderly process, rather than as the result of a fiat, should have been received with suspicion and alarm. And there is the less reason for wonder, since some of those who have assumed to be the custodians and expounders of this theory have exultantly proclaimed that it had destroyed the foundations of theistic faith. It is time, now, for sensible people to understand that such assertions are unscientific and baseless. The sublime statement with which our Bible begins is as credible to-day as it ever was. There never was and there never will be more than two theories of the origin of the universe; it is the product either of chance or of purpose. Between these two theories you must take your choice. The latter is intelligible, rational, probable. The former always was preposterous, but it is tenfold more so to-day than it was fifty years ago. We know that the sublime movements of the planets over our head, and the crystalline glories of the earth beneath our feet, and the wonderful and beautiful forms of life round about us, are not the outcome of chance. The unity, the harmony, the progress that we see,

disclose to us the working of an eternal Purpose. It is in that Purpose that Nature reveals to us the existence of that God who in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. It is not a demonstration, but the inference is clear and strong. Purpose means Intelligence; Purpose means Will; one Intelligence, one Will, one God.

II.

CAN MAN KNOW GOD?

How can we certainly know that the Universe is Divine, the indwelling of an Infinite Spirit, under the government of a living Mind? Well, if by evidence is meant such evidence as can be drawn out and tendered in a law court then I admit that there is none. Such evidence fails—but fails by the very nature of the case. It is not by demonstration that the finite soul can apprehend the soul of the universe. But though we cannot transcend our faculties, we can trust them. Though we cannot reason out the existence of God, we can find it. And this consciousness of the Divine is revelation, the unveiling of the heavenly light to the mind, carrying with it its own evidence, as surely as sunlight is a physical revelation to the eye.—CHARLES SHAKESPEARE.

Philosophy is based on the affirmation of God's existence, and not upon the denial of it.—JOHN FISKE.

We do not worship a law, however simple and fruitful it may be; we do not worship a force if it is blind, however universal it may be; nor an ideal, however pure, if it is an abstraction; we worship only a Being who is living perfection, perfection under the highest forms—thought, love.—CARO.

Personality does not involve limitation.—ELISHA MULFORD.

II.

CAN MAN KNOW GOD?

WE studied in the first chapter the bearings of the theory of evolution upon the belief in God, finding that the evidences of intelligence and purpose in nature are strengthened rather than weakened by this view of the world; that in the splendid array of organised facts which constitutes modern science there are proofs of creative Mind far more impressive than any that were visible to the men of a former generation.

But it may be said that although these reasonings *indicate* an intelligent Creator, they do not *prove* His existence; that though we may think it highly probable that God is, we cannot know that He is, or know anything about Him. This is, indeed, precisely what is said by a large class of philosophers and scientific men. They call themselves agnostics, which, as Mr. Frederic Harrison says, "is

simply dog-Greek for 'don't know.'" With regard to the central truths of religion—the existence of God, the immortality of the soul—they say that they have no knowledge, and that nobody can have any knowledge. They insist that God is not only unknown to them, but that He is unknowable by you and me, and by all men.

When many modern thinkers are heard speaking in this tone certain minds are deeply impressed. Authority is still a great matter, even among those who affect to despise authority; and when great names are quoted in support of the agnostic doctrine, multitudes who have neither the time nor the training requisite for a thorough investigation of the subject, make haste to conclude that religion has ceased to be a profitable subject of thought. Certainly it is not well for us to give much thought to a subject of which we have no certain knowledge.

Before too hastily adopting this conclusion it may be well for those who are thus inclined to reflect upon the circumstance that the first chapter of the volume* in which Mr. Herbert

* "First Principles."

Spencer lays the foundations of his system of philosophy is entitled "Religion and Science;" and in this chapter he asserts, very strongly, that there can never cease to be a place in the human mind for something of the nature of Religion, and "that Religion, everywhere present as a web running through the warp of human history, expresses some eternal fact." His aim, as he tells us, is to reconcile "the seemingly opposed convictions which Religion and Science embody." He wishes to reach some clear understanding of how it is "that Science and Religion express opposite sides of the same fact,—the one its near or visible side, and the other its remote or invisible side." Religion is not, then, a profitless theme of inquiry; the greatest of all the agnostics himself being witness.

It may be well to note also before we go any further, that the assertion by these philosophers that God is unknowable, means only that He is unknowable by the methods of science. Knowledge of God may come through other channels. Few of those who believe on Him have reached that belief through scientific processes. Suppose that a man says this: "I

have a feeling of dependence. I know that I am not the author of my own being; I know by an inward witness that I am not the sole arbiter of my own destiny; I know that with all the testimony of my consciousness there mingles this sense of reliance upon some Power greater than myself, greater than the universe about me, of which I am a part. This feeling is as much a part of my consciousness as is the feeling of personal identity. Just as truly as I know that I am I, do I know that there is a Power not myself on whom I depend for my existence, and to whom I am responsible. By some means, no matter how, I am led to believe that this Power above me is a friendly Power; that He sustains to me the relation of a Father; and I speak to Him in the silence, and He hears my voice, helps me in my infirmities, comforts me in my sorrows, gives me strength to resist evil, guides me in the ways of wisdom and peace. I have thus a knowledge of God which comes directly to me, through my own experience, and which is far more intimate and far more conclusive than any proof which science could offer me." If any man says this, science

has no power to confute him. All she can say is, "Your words may be true; for yourself they doubtless are true; but this knowledge you cannot communicate. You may tell others of your experience, and they may believe it, and may even verify it in their own experience; but knowledge of this kind is not scientific knowledge."

This is perfectly true. All this vast realm of personal experience and religious feeling lies outside the domain of science. I do not think that its foundations are touched by anything that science has said or can say. All the scientists in the world cannot make me believe that honey is not sweet, or that the rose is not fragrant, or that Schumann's "Träumerei" is not delicious, or that there is no pleasure in doing good, or that there is no sense of dependence in my own breast, or that there is no help and no comfort in prayer. What I know I know. Most of the people in the world who know about God, have gained their knowledge, such as they have, by this method of direct insight and personal experience. And when the scientific people say that God is unknowable they do not confute

this testimony, nor do they intend to deny that we may have some such experiences as this, and that it may answer for us all the ends of the most valuable knowledge.

Nevertheless, one does not like to hear them say that God is unknowable, from a scientific point of view. It is the fashion of our time to regard scientific knowledge as the most certain and valuable knowledge; and it jars a little on our sensibilities to be told that God is not to be approached along these shining paths of scientific investigation. Let us inquire, then, a little more carefully, precisely what our modern philosophers mean when they tell us that in this aspect of the case God is unknowable. Let us ask them to explain to us more particularly what they think we do know, and where our knowledge stops.

We know phenomena, they say, but we do not know substance; we know the appearance, but we do not know the reality. I know that an impression of form and of colour is made upon my organs of vision. My sensations report to me a certain symmetrical shape, with certain subdivisions and certain colours, and I infer that there is a large round window at

the opposite end of the room. I am not conscious of the window, I am only conscious of the sensations which the light brings to me from the window. It is a trained judgment that enables me to say, when these impressions are made on my optic nerves, "That is a window." A sudden impression is made upon my organs of hearing, and I infer that the impression is caused by the shutting of one of the doors, just beneath the window. A grateful sensation is reported by my organs of smell, and I infer that a rose is somewhere in the neighbourhood. A pungent and somewhat disagreeable sensation is experienced by my gustatory nerves, and I judge that quinine has been placed in my mouth. To the sense of touch comes the impression of a hard, smooth surface, and I infer that I am touching a piece of polished wood. Of course my senses assist one another in making these reports. I see the door swinging when I hear the concussion ; I look about for the rose when I detect the odour, and the report of its form and its colour brought to my eye confirms the report of its fragrance brought to my olfactories ; I judge by my sight as well as by my touch what kind

of surface it is that I am touching. But the philosophers say that I only know, absolutely, my sensations; that my reference of these sensations to the objects that caused them is an act of judgment, an inference, an indirect, not a direct perception. I shall not vex you with a discussion of this difficult question of sense-perception; I only wish to indicate the nature of the philosophical theories.

The various impressions thus made upon our senses prove to us, nevertheless, indirectly if not directly, that something exists besides ourselves. These various phenomena of vision, of touch, of smell, of taste, of hearing, are evidences of an external world. Of that external world we have scientific knowledge. And when we come to compare our various sensations, and to classify them, and to draw logical inferences from them, we gradually build up a great system of knowledge about this external world, and all this knowledge about the external world is finally expressed in terms of matter, motion, and force. Everything can be reduced to these terms. And the propositions that sum up all this knowledge are simply these: matter is indestructible; motion

is continuous; force is persistent. These are the ultimate truths of science.

Matter is indestructible. I take a piece of ice and melt it; the matter has clearly changed its form, but it is all there in the water, and in the portion of the water that has passed into the air in vapour. I heat the water up to boiling-point, and it all becomes vapour; but I have not destroyed it, I have only transformed it. Every particle of the matter that was in the solid ice at first and in the water afterward, is now existing in the gaseous form. Science proves by the most careful experiments, and assumes, as the foundation of all its reasonings, that matter is indestructible.

Motion is continuous. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the force which is revealed to us as motion is continuously at work. For example, you fire a rifle ball against a solid iron plate. The ball stops short at the barrier, and you say that the motion is arrested, but that is not true. Put your hand on the spot where it struck and you will find that it is hot. What is the heat? It is molecular motion. The particles of iron are quivering and vibrating most energetically as the

result of the impact of the swiftly-moving ball. You cannot see the motion, but it is there. The motion of the ball through the air goes right on in the molecular motion of the iron. And if the iron grows cool; if, that is to say, the molecular motion among its particles ceases, it is only because it has communicated that motion to the air which surrounds it.

Force is persistent. It may take many forms, but it never passes out of existence. It is the modern Proteus; it can assume multitudinous shapes, but it never loses its identity. Heat may change to motion. You see the heat of the coal transformed into the motion of the piston, every day. Motion may change to heat. That phenomenon will be evident enough to you if you will rub your own hands together briskly. Motion or heat may be transformed to electricity; your engine belt will show you how. All the different kinds of force that we know—light, heat, magnetism, electricity, chemical affinity—may pass into each other by successive transformations, and not a particle of energy be lost in all these metamorphoses. Thus science proves that these forces are all various manifestations

of one Force of which the universe is instinct. Light is force, or a manifestation to us of force, the impression made upon our visual organs by a vibrating ether. Heat is force, the sensation of heat is only the effect of vibrations of another sort that strike upon another sense. That electricity and magnetism are forces; that chemical reactions manifest force; that life is a force; that the magnificent movements of the worlds through space reveal to us force—all this is so plain that the wayfaring man needs not to be reminded of it. And even those conditions of matter that seem to us inactive and quiescent show us only the equilibrium of forces. The rock or the crystal appear to be at rest, but it is only as the two athletes are at rest when, with strength that is perfectly matched, and muscles straining, they are seen tugging at opposite ends of a rope. The instant that the strength of one of them begins to relax the motion will be positive enough. So, in the quartz or the iron, the chemical forces for the time being are holding each other in check, but the energies that are thus matched in temporary deadlock are of tremendous power.

Let us try to take in this conception, for it is one of mighty scope. The unity, the omnipresence, the persistency of force—who can think of it without wonder! Forty-five years ago Carlyle was crying in words like the words of a prophet, for little did he, when he uttered them, know their full meaning: “This Universe, ah, me!—what could the wild man know of it; what can we yet know? That it is a Force, and thousand-fold complexity of Forces; a force that is *not we*. That is all; it is not we, it is altogether different from us. Force, Force, everywhere Force; we ourselves a mysterious Force in the centre of that. ‘There is not a leaf rotting on the highway but has Force in it; how else could it rot?’ Nay, surely, to the atheistic thinker, if such a one were possible, it must be a miracle too, this huge, illimitable whirlwind of Force which envelopes us here, high as Immensity, old as Eternity. What is it?”*

The voice of a seer is this—of one who perceived moral and spiritual values most clearly, but who often spoke contemptuously of modern science. But now listen to a great

* “Heroes and Hero Worship,” p. 8.

expounder of this same modern science that Carlyle despised. It is the voice of Mr. John Fiske to which I bid you listen. He has been speaking of "the whole tendency of modern science to impress upon us ever more forcibly the truth that the entire knowable universe is an immense unit, animated throughout all its parts by a single principle of life," and has been illustrating his proposition by the doctrine of the luminiferous ether, through which, "radiating in every direction, from millions of centric points, run shivers of undulation, manifested in endless metamorphoses as heat, or light, or actinism, or magnetism, or electricity,"—thus furnishing the whole visible universe with a nervous system by which every part of it shares in the life of all the other parts; illustrating his proposition, too, by the wonderful revelations of spectrum analysis, which startle us by showing us in the luminous colour bands of the spectroscope that the nebulae and the fixed stars as well as our neighbour planets are all made of the same materials; and now he goes on in this stirring strain:

"It means that the universe as a whole is

thrilling in every fibre with Life—not, indeed, life in the usual restricted sense, but life in a general sense. The distinction, once deemed absolute, between the living and the not-living is converted into a relative distinction; and life as manifested in the organism is seen to be only a specialised form of the Unknown Life. The conception of matter as dead or inert belongs indeed to an order of thought that modern science has entirely outgrown. If the study of physics has taught us anything it is that nowhere in Nature is inertness or quiescence to be found. All is quivering with energy. From particle to particle without cessation the movement passes on.” *

All this we know; so modern science solemnly declares. We do know the existence and something of the manifestations of this mighty, marvellous universal Force that fills all the worlds, and all the spaces between them, with its myriad activities, its countless products.

Is this all we know? So some philosophers say. But not so Mr. Herbert Spencer. He insists that we know more than this. He tells us that this Force which is thus revealed to us

* “The Idea of God,” pp. 144—153.

is not self-existent; that it does not set itself in motion; that it is caused; and that behind it all is the Unknown Cause. We know not only the phenomena of Force that present themselves to our senses; we know that behind these phenomena is an infinite Reality. With the most convincing logic he shows that this Power behind phenomena is the necessary datum of all our reasoning; that we cannot think without assuming it; that "among our necessary beliefs this has the highest validity of any." He calls this Reality behind all phenomena the "Unknowable Cause of all the effects constituting the knowable world;" he calls it that "Inscrutable Existence which Science, in the last resort, is compelled to recognise as unrevealed by its deepest analyses of matter, motion, thought, and feeling;" he calls it "the Infinite and Eternal Energy," the "Ultimate Existence," "the Ultimate Cause from which Humanity has proceeded." Mr. Spencer contends that this Unknown Reality is the one indestructible element of consciousness, "which persists at all times, under all circumstances, and cannot cease until consciousness ceases." It is the "Power

of which man and the world are products, and which is manifested through man and the world from instant to instant." * I am giving you his words, and plenty of them, so that you can judge for yourselves what he means by them. These words certainly do not sound like a denial of the first truth of religion, but rather like a most impressive reaffirmation of that truth. It is the irresistible conclusion to which science and philosophy coerce us, that there is behind all phenomena an Infinite and Eternal Power. No thinker, in all the world's history, has ever demonstrated this fact with such a wealth of argument, with such unanswerable proofs, as those which are exhibited by Mr. Herbert Spencer.

"Why, then, is he called an agnostic?" you demand. "Surely he seems to know a great deal. What is it that he does not know?" He does not know, he says, *what* this Power is; he only knows *that* it is. Just here he takes issue with some of the Christian philosophers, with Sir William Hamilton, and Dean

* For the phrases and sentences here quoted consult "First Principles," chap. v., and the essay entitled "Retrogressive Religion," *passim*.

Mansel, and others. These thinkers insisted that we cannot even *know* that Infinite Being exists ; we can *believe* it, but we cannot *know* it. They *believed* in an Eternal and Absolute Existence, but they argued that it could not be *known*. But Mr. Spencer disputes them, and triumphantly, I think. “To say that we cannot know the Absolute,” he says, “is, by implication, to affirm that there is an Absolute. In the very denial of our power to learn what the Absolute is, there lies hidden the assumption that it is ; and the making of this assumption proves that the Absolute has been present to the mind, not as a nothing but as a something.”*

So, then, we know, according to Mr. Spencer, not only the existence of that universal Force which is manifested throughout creation, but we know that behind that Force there is an unknown Cause. The universe is one ; the unknown Cause is One. But this is all, Mr. Spencer insists, that we do know. We are not entitled to go on and tell *what* this unknown Reality is. We know nothing about that and can know nothing. He forbids us to say that it is a person ; and I suppose he

* “First Principles,” s. 26.

would deny us the right to speak of it as intelligence. It is a Mystery into which we cannot penetrate. This is the nature of Mr. Spencer's agnosticism. His contention that we cannot know God as possessing personal attributes is the gravamen of the charge against him.

As between this confession of entire lack of knowledge and that assumption of perfect intimacy with the secret counsels of the infinite Mind which is habitual with some theologians I should be inclined to stand with Mr. Spencer. A great many people talk about the feelings and designs and purposes of the Most High as if He were their next-door neighbour. Against this aggressive familiarity it is well to lift up a protest. Job was something of an agnostic :

Canst thou by searching find out God ?
Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ?
It is high as heaven ; what canst thou do ?
Deeper than Sheol ; what canst thou know ?

Before this Mystery of infinite Existence we do well to bow reverently. The attempt to make God altogether like one of ourselves, to limit His actions by the categories of our logic, to insist that His government must be framed

after our models of state-craft, is a species of idolatry quite too common. Nevertheless we do know something about Him, more, I am sure, than Mr. Spencer was willing to allow when he wrote his *Laws of the Unknowable*. We cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, but we can find out something about Him which it is unspeakably important that we should know. Mr. Spencer's affirmations of our knowledge concerning the Unknown Power are strong and conclusive; his denials seem to me infirm and self-contradictory. We cannot conceive of God as a person, he says, because the only *conception* we can form of a personality involves limitation and finiteness. In all this argument he follows Sir William Hamilton and Mr. Mansel, but neither they nor he have made the matter clear. The vice of all this reasoning is in assuming that we know nothing that we cannot conceive or imagine, that we cannot picture to ourselves in thought. I know that Space is infinite; I know it as well as I know anything, but I cannot conceive of infinite Space.

Mr. Spencer's illustrations with respect to the limitations of human knowledge furnish a

sufficient answer to his theory about our knowledge of God.

“Matter,” he says, “is either infinitely divisible or it is not ; no third possibility can be named. Which of the alternatives shall we accept? If we say that matter is infinitely divisible we commit ourselves to a supposition not realisable in thought. We can bisect and re-bisect a body, and continually repeating the act until we reduce its parts to a size no longer physically divisible, may then mentally continue the process without limit. To do this, however, is not really to conceive the infinite divisibility of matter, but to form a symbolic conception incapable of expansion into a real one, and not admitting of other verification. Really to conceive the infinite divisibility of matter is mentally to follow out the divisions to infinity, and to do this would require infinite time. On the other hand, to assert that matter is not infinitely divisible is to assert that it is reducible to parts which no conceivable power can divide, and this verbal supposition can no more be represented in thought than the other. For each of such ultimate parts, did they exist, must have an

under and an upper surface, a right and left side, like any large fragment. Now it is impossible to imagine its sides so near that no plane of section can be conceived between them. . . . So that to human intelligence the one hypothesis is no more acceptable than the other, and yet the conclusion that one or other must agree with the fact seems to human intelligence unavoidable.”*

“Seems,” indeed! It *is* to human intelligence unavoidable. Matter *is* either infinitely divisible or it is not. One of these two theories must be true. You cannot conceive of the truth of either of them, but you know that one of them is true. You know many things that you cannot conceive. Take another of his inconceivabilities:

“A body travelling at a given velocity cannot be brought to a state of rest or no velocity, without passing through all intermediate velocities. At first sight nothing seems easier than to imagine it doing this. It is quite possible to think of its motion as diminishing insensibly until it becomes infinitesimal; and many will think it equally possible to pass a

* “First Principles,” s. 16.

thought from infinitesimal motion to no motion. Mentally follow out the decreasing velocity as long as you please, and still there remains *some* velocity. Halve and halve again the rate of movement forever, yet movement still exists; and the smallest movement is separated by an impossible gap from no movement. As something, no matter how great, is infinitely great in comparison with nothing, so is even the least conceivable motion infinite, as compared with rest."*

But does Mr. Spencer mean to tell us that we cannot know that any moving body ever does finally stand still? We certainly do know that bodies change their state from rest to motion, and from motion to rest. We certainly do know that we have ridden upon railway trains that were moving forty miles an hour, and that these trains have come to a full stop quite a number of times, and even gone in the opposite direction. Grant that we cannot *conceive* how this can be; we know it. It is absurd to say that we do not know it. The theorem of the asymptote of the hyperbola is equally inconceivable; do we not know that it is true?

* "First Principles," s. 17.

Now I am quite unable to see why this character of inconceivability makes impossible the knowledge of God any more than it makes impossible the knowledge of many inconceivable facts of every-day experience. If we know many of these common truths in spite of the fact that we cannot conceive them, we may know that the Infinite Being is a person although we cannot conceive how the infinite can be personal or how personality can be infinite. Indeed, I am not at all satisfied with Mr. Spencer's reasonings on this subject of personality; it seems to me that he misleads himself by merely verbal distinctions; and that the greatest of modern German philosophers, Herman Lotze, goes far more deeply into the whole matter when he declares that "Perfect personality is reconcilable only with the conception of an Infinite Being; for finite beings only an approximation to this is attainable."* But we will not tax our brains with this metaphysical puzzle, nor need we take any more time in replying to Mr. Spencer's agnostic arguments. I prefer to fix your thought upon his affirmations; for if you get

* "Philosophy of Religion," 69.

the full force of them, his denials may be left to take care of themselves.

It is only fair to Mr. Spencer to remark, also, that his latest statements have considerably modified his first denials. He still adheres to an agnostic position; but his admissions, in his reply to Mr. Harrison, bring him very close to the boundaries of a positive theism. "The Power manifested throughout the universe," he says, "distinguished as material, is the same power which in ourselves wells up under the forms of consciousness;" and again: "*This Inscrutable Existence . . . stands toward our general conception of things in substantially the same relation as does the Creative Power asserted by theology.*"* The italics are mine.

"This consciousness of an Incomprehensible Power," he argues "called omnipresent from inability to assign its limits, is just that consciousness on which Religion dwells." Yes; men will keep thinking of that Power. Before

That which we dare invoke to bless,
Our dearest faith, our ghostliest doubt,
He, They, One, All, within, without,
The Power in darkness whom we guess,

* "Retrogressive Religion."

the world still bows down in awe and reverence, and will for ever. Mr. Spencer himself, with clearest affirmation, bears witness that men will never be able to rid themselves of thoughts about this Power. The only question is how they shall think about it. What he seems to say is that we must keep thinking that we do not know anything about it. It must be owned that this is rather a forlorn occupation. The recreations of Tantalus were nearly as satisfying. And we must think—thinkers as we are by birthright; lovers as we are by deepest impulse—that this “Ultimate Cause from which humanity has proceeded,” is not, so far as we can ever know, either a Thinker or a Lover; we can have no assurance that there is anything in that Ultimate Being which is kindred with our reason and our love! No; I do not believe that we shall find this conclusion possible.

Mr. Spencer himself once or twice partly relents from his injunction of nescience. “Very likely,” he says in one place, “there will ever remain a need to give shape to that indefinite sense of an Ultimate Existence which forms the basis of our intelligence.

We shall always be under the necessity of contemplating it as *some* mode of being.”* True, O philosopher. And, in the deepest analysis, there are just two modes of being to choose between. We must think of the Ultimate Existence; we must think of it as “some mode of being”; we must think of it either as Matter or as Spirit, as physical or as psychical. Which shall it be? Which is the more rational, to interpret it to ourselves by that in ourselves which is highest or by that which is lowest? Is it not easier to believe that this Power behind phenomena is an infinite Spirit, a conscious Intelligence, than to believe that it is mindless energy, or blind necessity?

“In the deepest sense,” says Mr. Fiske, “all that we really know is mind, and, as Clifford would say, what we call the material universe is simply an imperfect picture in our minds of a real universe of mind-stuff. . . . To speak of the hidden Power itself as ‘material,’ is, therefore, not merely to state what is untrue, it is to talk nonsense. *We are bound to conceive of the Eternal Reality in terms of the only reality that we know, or else refrain from*

* “First Principles,” s. 31.

conceiving it under any terms whatsoever. But the latter alternative is clearly impossible. We might as well attempt to escape from the air in which we breathe as to expel from consciousness the Power which is manifested throughout what we call the natural universe. But the only conclusion we can consistently hold, is that this is the very same Power which in ourselves wells up under the forms of consciousness." * "The presence of God," says this same thinker, solemnly, "is the one all-pervading fact of life, from which there is no escape; [and] while in the deepest sense the nature of Deity is unknowable by finite man, nevertheless the exigencies of our thinking oblige us to symbolise that nature in some form that has a real meaning for us; and we cannot symbolise that nature as in any wise physical, but are bound to symbolise it as in some way psychical." †

Such, I am persuaded, is the logical and inevitable outcome of the Spencerian philosophy, as respects the question of the existence of God. If Mr. Spencer falls short of this conclusion himself, it is because his logic halts.

* "The Idea of God," p. 153. † "The Idea of God," p. 16.

Indeed, he draws very near it in that essay on "Retrogressive Religion," in which he says that "the necessity we are under to think of the external energy in terms of the internal energy gives a spiritualistic rather than a materialistic aspect to the universe."

But if he declines to make the full inference himself, there is no reason why we should fail to do so. His mighty affirmations have opened a door out of this wide mystery of Nature that his lame denials have failed to close. If he will not go through the door himself, why should not we? It is incredible that we should know all that he bids us know, and know no more. Up to the very borders of the dark profound he leads us, and then he pauses. It is the barrier from which many a daring thinker has turned back.

"What is beyond this veil of sense?" we ask him eagerly. It is the question of the ages. "Is it all blank nothingness and vacancy?"

"Nay;" he answers confidently. "Beyond that veil is the mightiest, the most august, the most certain of all Realities. It is the only Reality. All on this side is but appearance."

“Do you believe this, or do you know it?”

“I know it,” he answers. “An ever-present sense of this real Existence is the very basis of our intelligence.”

“What is this Reality?”

“It is the Power of which man and this world are products; it is the Ultimate Cause from which Humanity has proceeded.”

“Is this all you know?”

“In ourselves this Power wells up under the form of consciousness; and our lives, alike physical and mental, are but the workings of this Power.”

“Can you give it no name?”

“It is the Unknowable.”

We listen and ponder. The Unknowable!
“Call it by that name if you will,” we answer, “a more reverent word shall be ours.” That infinite Reality, veiled from sense, revealed to thought, from which our lives, alike physical and mental, have sprung, is an infinite Spirit. That infinite Power, whose handiwork, throughout the universe, is emblazoned all over with indubitable signs of marvellous wisdom, and far-reaching and all-encompassing purpose, is an infinite Intelligence. That

Ultimate Cause from which Humanity has proceeded is not out of all relation to that which is highest in Humanity. Taught by Mr. Fiske, Mr. Spencer's greatest expositor, we solemnly confess, it is "a Being with whom the human soul in the deepest sense owns kinship." "The infinite and eternal Power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God."

Thus we stand on the firm shore to which the great philosopher has brought us, and fling back into the abyss where it belongs that epithet "Unknowable," wherewith he bids us name the ever-living One; and falling

Upon the great world's altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

we join our voices with shining ranks above us, and the innumerable company of trusting souls here on earth, saying,

*We praise Thee, O God;
We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord;
All the earth doth worship Thee,
The Father Everlasting!*

III.

IS MAN ONLY A MACHINE?

He who is pleased with this complete transmutation of human life into a play of fatalistic forces, void of merit and blame, is not to be confuted on speculative ground. The moving reason for contradicting such views lies entirely in an undemonstrable but strong and immediate conviction that it is *not so*, and that the conception of an "ought," and of an obligation, which finds no place at all in such a view, has, nevertheless, the most indubitable and incontrovertible significance.—HERMAN LOTZE.

It is this power of choice that belongs, as an elementary constituent, to a rational soul, and it is in this that the deepest freedom consists—a freedom which can be taken away only by destroying the soul itself. External obstacles may prevent our attaining or even struggling for that which we choose. If the choice be not absolute we may be forced, as it is said, to work for an end which we do not choose, and this is slavery; but still there always remains an absolute power of choice which no weapon can reach and no violence can overcome. Man can always be loyal to God and duty.—MARK HOPKINS.

III.

IS MAN ONLY A MACHINE ?

WHILE walking one day in a distant city, my attention was attracted by a singular toy windmill which some mechanical genius had mounted upon a staff in his garden. There were two wheels, the one above the other, turning horizontally upon the perpendicular axis. At the ends of the spokes of these wheels were funnel-shaped cups opening horizontally. On one wheel these cups turned in one direction, and on the other in the opposite direction. The air was still when I first saw them, but as I looked a breeze arose and set them in motion, and I saw that, in obedience to the wind, one wheel revolved from left to right and the other from right to left. The stronger the breeze the faster they revolved, but they went in exactly opposite directions. Both were moved by the same

power; it was the same breath of air that started them both, but the one went round with the sun and the other in the opposite direction.

Is not this, I thought, a good analogy for what is taking place every day in the moral world? The same influences, acting upon different men, move them in exactly opposite directions. The same circumstance makes one man sad and another man merry; causes one to sit down in dejection and another to spring into action; inspires one with courage and another with fear. Take two men occupying the same station in life, give to them both prosperity, honour, applause, and you shall see the character of the one sweetened and enriched by his good fortune, while by the same means the character of the other is tainted and degraded. Bereavement or disaster falls on one and makes him gloomy, morose, and bitter; it falls on another and develops in his life a grace and gentleness never before known.

Open your watch and you will see the wheels moving in opposite directions, yet all driven by the same motive power. So in the great

mechanism of society the same forces applied to different lives produce contrasted results. The rewards of industry, the retributions of idleness or vice, the stimulus of popularity, the mortification of defeat, these do not affect all men alike. Some are lifted up by them and some are cast down, some are helped forward and some are held back.

Sometimes you may find the delicious strawberry and the deadly night-shade, the fragrant heliotrope and the noxious bramble growing side by side. The same soil nourished them, the same dews watered them, the same winds fanned them, the same sunbeams warmed them, but the products of these genial influences were in the one case a toothsome and wholesome fruit and in another a disgusting poison ; in one case an exquisite perfume and in the other a noisome odour.

Our beneficent Creator makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sends His rain upon the just and the unjust, and not only do these providential favours *find* men in these contrasted conditions, they even produce such contrasts, they *make* some evil and others good, make some hearts harder and others more

tender, spiritualise some and animalise or demoralise others.

I have known two brothers who dwelt under the same roof, played in their infancy with the same toys, slept in the same crib, said the same prayers, knelt by the same family altar, sat in the same pew at church, and shared equally in the same parental love and care; and the one went up to integrity and honour and the other went down to crime and infamy.

From the same father's side,

From the same mother's knee,

One to long darkness and the frozen tide—

One to the peaceful sea.

Not only under the leadings of good influences do we see these diverse results wrought out in character, but under bad influences as well. In families the most wretched and degraded, where all the surroundings are such as to mislead and corrupt the children, you have sometimes seen some of them resisting the evil environment, and growing up clean and honourable, while the rest were sinking always deeper and deeper into misery and shame. .

How shall we account for these things? How happens it that the same forces drive one in one direction and another in the opposite direction? How comes it to pass that the same external influences are to some a savour of life unto life, and to some a savour of death unto death?

The theory that men are the creatures of circumstance is completely set at naught by multitudinous facts like these. That external circumstances do greatly affect the characters of most men is undoubtedly true. Most of us are more or less shaped by our circumstances. The customs and standards of the social life in the midst of which we live, the teaching and the example of our parents, the influence of our associates, the common maxims of morality, the common practices of men, all help to make us what we are. The language upon our lips every day, which is an instrument of thought, wrought out for us by the intellectual and moral life of past generations, and which embodies their conceptions of good and evil, of right and wrong, helps powerfully in the development of our characters. That we are constantly acted upon by forces, many and

subtle and powerful, is not to be questioned. But the fact which we are now considering is the patent fact that men often resist these influences. Instead of being coerced by their circumstances, they react upon their circumstances, and modify them essentially. Circumstances often have a great influence in the development of character, but they are not the sole and efficient causes of character. The fact that they do have an influence so great ought to lead us to do what we can to improve the circumstances of our fellow men; to remove the temptations by which they are surrounded; to throw around them better influences; but it is a very shallow philosophy which expects to eradicate evil from the world by changes in the environment.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves.

Was it circumstances that shaped the life of Aaron Burr, the son of the President of Princeton College, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, who sank from a home of honour and purity into an abyss of social and political perfidy? Was Abraham Lincoln or James A. Garfield the creature of circumstances? Have

not many of the noblest men of history reached greatness by resisting and mastering their circumstances? This explanation of the wide differences in human character is palpably inadequate.

The difference is caused, you say, by differences in the natural dispositions of individuals more than in their circumstances. Human beings are differently organised. The native qualities of mind and heart are different. Therefore they are differently affected by the influences that surround them. That was true of the toy windmill. The two wheels were differently constructed. The little air-buckets on one turned one way, and on the other the other way. That was the reason why they went in opposite directions. The same was true of the plants in the other illustration. The organism of the strawberry differs from that of the deadly nightshade; the nature of the heliotrope from the nature of the bramble. Each one takes from the earth and the air and the sun just that which by its nature it is fitted to take, and thus the differences of their products are explained by the differences of their constitution. Is it not precisely so with

men? Are they not differently organised? Is it not, therefore, as natural for the good man to be good, and the bad man to be bad, as for the strawberry to be nutritious and the belladonna to be poisonous?

Such differences there are, no doubt; and they must be fairly considered in judging men. Not only circumstance, but native endowment also, is a great factor in the development of character. We are born with different tastes, different appetencies, different physical and mental powers, different moral tendencies. Take two men and put them in the same circumstances and bring the same motives to bear upon them, and one of them will naturally, as we say, act in one way, and the other just as naturally in another way. That is to say, in following out their natural and spontaneous impulses, the conduct of the one will differ very greatly from that of the other.

Now, there are those who say that human conduct and human character are determined by these two causes that we have been considering—external circumstances and internal organisation. This is the doctrine of the Materialists. “Man,” says Moleschott, “is

produced from wind and ashes. The action of vegetable life called him into existence. Man is the sum of his parents and his wet-nurse, of time and place, of wind and weather, of sound and light, of food and clothing; his will is the necessary consequence of all these causes governed by the laws of nature, just as the planet in its orbit and the vegetable in its soil. Thought consists of the motion of matter. It is a translocation of the cerebral substance; without phosphorus there can be no thought; and consciousness itself is nothing but an attribute of matter.”* “Free will,” says Carl Vogt, “does not exist; neither does any amenability or responsibility, such as morals and penal justice and heaven knows what would impose upon us. At no moment are we our own masters. . . . The organism cannot govern itself; it is governed by the laws of its material combination. It is impossible to demonstrate the admissibility of punishment.”† In such a philosophy there is, of course, no room for morality. If this theory of human nature is

* Quoted by Christlieb; “Modern Doubt and Christian Belief,” p. 146.

† Ibid. 158.

sound, the feelings of obligation, of shame, of remorse for wrong-doing, of indignation toward evil-doers, are all illusions. So the thorough-going materialists at once frankly say. They declare that the moral sense is a mirage, and that such words as sin and righteousness, responsibility and guilt are words without meaning. The logic of materialism, as it applies to human conduct, is fairly expressed in a satirical lyric, entitled "The Murderer of the Period," published in one of the newspapers a few years ago. The murderer is replying to the outcry of popular indignation which has arisen upon the commission of his crime. I must beg pardon for quoting from myself; the verses put the doctrine of Moleschott and Vogt more neatly than any prose sentences that I could now fashion :

But what, after all, is the pother about ?

A man (or a dog, say) is dead.

Is a dog or a man worth this tumult and rout ?

How much are they worth, by the head ?

In the struggle for life, so the sages will say,

One man has gone down—that is all ;

But 'tis always the strongest survive the affray ;

The weakest get pushed to the wall.

Here was live protoplasm, six quarters or so ;

Now 'tis dead protop'asm ; what more ?

No force has been lost, as the chemists will show ;
The world is as rich as before.

All the atoms are here ; all the builders are here,
And better work waits them, no doubt ;
You zealots, who clamour for vengeance severe,
Do you know what you're talking about ?

Pray, what have I done ? There are forces that play
And tissues that waste in the brain ;

Some acetous ferment waked the passion to slay ;

'Twas the same, very likely, with Cain.

Will you fly in the face of a kingdom of laws ?

Do you call a secretion a sin ?

Is the steel when it rusts, and the snow when it thaws,
A criminal, too, of my kin ?

Bethink you, good people ; hear reason at last ;

The vengeance you ask for is vain ;

You are haunted by ghosts of a day that is past—
Mere films of a fatuous brain.

Guilt, crime, obligation—such words are outworn ;

On the ear of true science they jar ;

And you surely can't know, in your anger and scorn,
How unscientific you are !

The extracts which I have just read from leading materialists fully justify this murderer's plea. If man is what they say he is, all words of censure, all feelings of indignation expressed against the worst criminals are not only unscientific, but absurd. You cannot say that it is unjust to blame a man for what he does, because the word unjust has no meaning. If a man insults you with an

opprobrious epithet you have no more reason for being angry with him than with the wind for blowing the snow in your face; if he wantonly smites you with his fist, you are as silly to resent it as you would be to resent the falling of an icicle from the eaves upon your head.

It will be difficult, I imagine, to bring the human race round to this philosophy. There are a great many things in the words and the thoughts and the feelings of men that this philosophy does not account for. The largest and the best part of the literature and the art of all the nations would be meaningless rubbish if this doctrine is true. Most of it is permeated and suffused in every line, in every shade, by the idea that man is something more than a machine, set in motion and kept in motion by the currents of physical force. If what Moleschott says is true, "that good and bad actions, courage, half-heartedness and treachery are all natural phenomena"—the great epics, the great tragedies, the great novels of the world are a farrago of superstitious ravings, for they all interpret life as deriving all its solemn meaning from laws and relations which this philosophy denies and

spurns. All our jurisprudence, too, with its talk about guilt and responsibility, with its insistence upon the intention as the heart of every action, is utter nonsense, upon this theory. Our ethics must all be unlearned; the commonest words of our language expurgated from our daily speech; our laws all rewritten. Punishment, as Carl Vogt says, is wholly inadmissible on a materialistic basis. We might, I suppose, confine men in prison if they proved dangerous to society; but not with any implication of censure upon their conduct.

When we find the whole drift and tenor of human thought and speech and conduct contradicted and set at nought by the materialistic theory it very naturally occurs to us that the theory is probably wrong, and that the human race is right. The very strong probability is that Sophocles and Socrates and Cicero and Marcus Antoninus and Epictetus and Dante and Shakespeare and Schiller and Goethe, and all the rest of mankind for that matter, with the exception of a corporal's guard of materialistic philosophers, are more nearly correct in their interpretation of the facts of human life than Moleschott and Feuerbach and their

compeers, and that other factors, besides organisation and circumstance, unite to make up human character; that man is something more than a machine.

Man is, indeed, a machine—a very curiously-constructed and delicately-adjusted machine. His body is an engine of wonderfully-fashioned levers and hinges and pinions; many of its motions depend as truly upon the food taken into the stomach and the air breathed into the lungs as the motions of the steam-engine depend upon the coal burned in the furnace. The organs of sense are nicely-fashioned pieces of mechanism, fitted to be acted on by external stimuli, whose sensitive tissues vibrate with the impact of waves of light or sound. It takes a great many kinds of power, some crude and obvious to the sense, some subtle and impalpable, to keep this machine in motion; and while life lasts it is constantly played upon and kept in operation by these ever-present forces.

There is even a sense in which the mind that inhabits the body is a delicate mechanism. The forces by which it is moved are wholly unlike those that move the body, and the action and reaction of the mental machinery

do not follow the laws of the bodily structure ; nevertheless the mind has laws and sequences of its own ; its powers are acted upon in definite ways ; ideas will set the spindles whirling by which fancies are spun, and the shuttles flying by which thoughts are woven ; and these mental processes are not, in sane minds, haphazard combinations, but orderly and continuous activities. So there is an important sense in which man is a machine, acted upon, moved, driven by the forces that constitute his environment. Work goes on continually in my body and in my mind which is the effect of the various physical and mental stimuli applied to my organs or my faculties—work which is automatically done.

And not only is it true that man is a marvellously-constructed machine, it is also true that there are great differences between these human machines. Some of them are far more perfectly constructed, far more delicately adjusted than others. As the forces of mind and matter play upon them, some of them are fitted to produce much finer work in the realm of character and conduct than others. That difference of organisation of

which we spoke does exist; and if man were nothing but a machine, this difference in his physical and moral mechanism would explain all the differences of conduct and character. It does explain some of these differences. Some men are naturally better than others. They are made of better materials, and they are put together in better form. Character results in part from the action of the environment upon the physical and mental mechanism; and so far as it does result from this cause, differences in the environment, and differences in the mechanism unite to explain differences of character.

But man is something more than a machine. A machine is acted upon by a force external to itself; it starts when that force is applied; it stops when that force is withdrawn. It cannot move itself. Man originates many of his own movements, both of body and of mind. Some of these movements, as I have said, are caused by forces acting upon him from without; but some of them he himself initiates. He is a machine, but he is something more than a machine. He is also the power that moves the machine. I bid my eyelids to close, my lips

to open, my hand to rise, and they obey me. The mechanism of my body is employed to do this work, but that which sets the mechanism in operation is no external stimulus; it is I myself, my thought, my choice, my volition that originate the movement. The power that starts the machine is no part of the machine. Matter is a fact, motion is a fact, the Unknown Cause of matter and motion is a fact, but the one fact of which I am more certain than any other, the fact on which all my knowledge is founded, is, as Tennyson says:—

Not matter, nor the finite-infinite,
But this main miracle, that [I am I]
With power on [my] own act, and on the world.

More than this. Man says, "I ought." The most perfect machine that was ever made never said anything of the sort, nor would it, if it could speak and account for all its relations. What does this word mean? It means that there is something above me that commands me, but does not coerce me; that lays its imperative upon me, and yet leaves me free to obey or disobey.

Wherever men are found we find running

through all their thought and speech and influencing all their conduct the ideas of right and duty. I do not know that it makes any difference to us how these ideas arose, if we find them now universal and ineradicable in the minds of human beings. This we do find. Every man has this sense of obligation, and it is the deepest fact of his experience. "I ought to do right," is the voice that he must hear, and that he cannot disobey without a sense of pain. So much conscience as this every human being possesses. He knows that he ought to do right. "The idea of a valid and binding Truth, and the sense of Universal Right, and a Universal Standard by which all reality must be tried," is, as Lotze says, a "common and indestructible feature of the human mind."* In this sense conscience is universal and infallible. It never fails to tell us that we ought to do right. It does not infallibly tell us what actions are right. That part of conscience needs to be educated. It may and does make terrible mistakes. But it always does bear witness within us of a right that ought to be done, of a wrong that ought to be

* "Microcosmus," i. 713.

shunned. And this word "Ought," which no human being can help speaking, is what makes a man a man. "The self-judging Conscience," says Lotze, "and the ineradicable idea of binding Duty which in us accompanies thought and feeling, distinguish human creatures, as members of a realm of Mind, from brutes whose vital activity depends on feeling merely."*

Let us examine a little more carefully, what is involved in this word "Ought."

It implies, as Lotze has just said, "a sense of universal right, and a universal standard by which all reality must be tried."

It implies that I am capable of comprehending this standard more or less clearly, and of directing my conduct so that it shall conform to it.

It implies, therefore, that I am free to choose between obedience and disobedience, free to choose the right and to refuse the wrong. As Kant says, "I ought, therefore I can." What I ought to do I can do. I ought always to choose the right, and I can always choose it. I may, however, lack power to realise my choices. The innocent prisoner

* Ibid. 714.

confined within his cell, may choose to seek out and befriend the enemy by whose false accusation he has been imprisoned, but he cannot do so ; the dungeon doors restrain him. He chooses the right, but he cannot perform it. The guilty prisoner in the next cell may choose to slay the true witness by whose testimony he was convicted, but he cannot realise his choice ; the dungeon doors restrain him. He chooses the wrong, but he cannot perform it. Each one of them is free to choose the right or the wrong, and it is in this choice, this intention that morality has its seat. In many ways men are hindered from realising their choices. I may choose to be a very liberal giver, yet lack the power to bestow liberal gifts. If the choice be sincere, and not a pleasing illusion with which I flatter my own self-complacency ; if it be really true that I would use abundance bountifully if I had it, then my choice has in it the essence of virtue, even though my benefactions may be small.

I ought to choose the right, always, and I can always choose it. I ought to realise my right choice whenever I can, but I cannot always realise it. My freedom of choice is

perfect. My freedom of action is often restricted. The slave or the child may be coerced in his actions, he cannot be coerced in his choices. Spite of tyrants, spite of circumstances, spite of personal defects and limitations and infirmities, we are all free to set our hearts upon that which appears to us to be right, to love it, to wish for it, to strive toward it with the energy of our souls ; and when we do this we obey that moral imperative which always utters its voice within our souls, and at the bar of the Everlasting Right we are justified.

The fact that in this sense all men are morally free—free to choose the right when it is made known to them—is the foundation of all morality. It has been disputed by materialistic scientists and fatalistic theologians ; it is curious to find the oldest school of theology and the newest school of science joining hands to deny this fundamental fact of human nature. The kind of arguments by which it is disproved are exactly the same kind of arguments by which you can disprove the possibility of the change from motion to rest in a moving body. As we saw in a

previous chapter you can prove, by logic, incontrovertibly, that a railroad train in motion never can stop. But you know that railroad trains do stop. You can prove by logic that infinite space is unthinkable. But you cannot think at all without assuming the infinity of space. You stultify yourself if you deny it. In like manner, though many logical arguments can be constructed to prove that freedom of choice is not conceivable, every man knows that he is free. It is a postulate of the practical reason without which he cannot think or speak intelligibly about human conduct. The most thorough-going materialist will be angry with the man who wrongs him, and will blame him for the wrong. His words of censure imply that the wrong-doer was morally free and responsible. He would not blame the stone that rolled down upon him from the mountain-side. What is more he blames himself, when he does what he feels to be wrong. The feelings of shame and remorse are there in his heart, and he cannot eradicate them. No man ever did. But why does he blame himself if he is not free? Blame a machine? Preposterous!

Language is full of the most subtle and unanswerable implications of freedom. What is the subjunctive or potential mood? What do you mean when you say, "I may, can, must; I might, could, would, should?" All this is gibberish if the materialist and the fatalist are sound philosophers. It is much more likely that it is the materialist and the fatalist who talk gibberish, and that these most familiar words of common speech have some deep and true meaning.

I have said that, while we know infallibly that we ought to do right we are often in doubt and sometimes mistaken when we [try to judge what actions are right. The moral judgment needs to be enlightened and educated. But the feeling that I ought to do right involves the feeling that I ought to seek by every means in my power to enlighten my moral judgment so that I shall know what right is. When I have done my best to discover what is right, then I am bound to do what seems to me right. That is right for me.

But is there no rule by which we may be aided in determining what actions are right? I think that there is a rule of this kind which

we may often find serviceable, and it is thus stated by Dr. Martineau: "Every action is right, which in presence of a lower principle follows a higher; every action is wrong, which in presence of a higher principle follows a lower." Of course there is no definite scale of motives or principles of action which all men agree in applying; yet there is, in every man's mind, a recognition, more or less clear, of motives as higher or lower, and every man feels that when motives conflict he ought to choose the higher instead of the lower. Thus the act of the Good Samaritan was right, because the motive of compassion, which he followed, was higher than the motives of fear, or of selfish love of ease, which would have led him to pass by on the other side. The priest and the Levite followed the lower motive, and did wrong. The act of Benedict Arnold was wrong, because the indulgence of wounded pride and personal greed, to which he yielded in betraying his country, were lower motives than the dictates of loyalty and honour which he must have resisted. The act of the elector or the legislator who takes a bribe is wrong, because the love of money which actuates him

is baser than the love of the State which he tramples under foot. Of course it may often be difficult for us to determine the relative rank of the principles that move us, and our motives are often so mixed that we cannot easily disentangle them, yet this rule will be found, I am sure, in the majority of cases, a safe and practicable guide of conduct. And it is precisely here that the feeling of obligation comes home to us with power. In the presence of a lower and a higher principle of action, either of which I may choose, I know that I ought to choose the higher.

The being that recognises these relations and acknowledges these feelings is something more than a machine. There is something in such a being that no laws of mechanism can explain. He is a self-moving agent, a moral power, responsible and free. When you examine the contents of his being and the record of his conduct, you find that circumstances have had much to do in making him what he is, and that his original outfit of body and of mind—the organisation—the mechanism which nature furnished him at the outstart, has also been an important factor, but you also

find another element deeper and more vital than either of these, and that is his free personality. By his own free choices, again and again, he has mastered his circumstances, favourable and unfavourable, and his impulses good and bad, and his tendencies virtuous or vicious, and has made himself better or worse by his own volition. For much of that bundle of habits and propensities which now constitutes his character he is directly responsible. Much of it is his own work. No man is wholly self-made, but every man is in a very large degree a self-made man. He is responsible for that part of himself which he has made and for that only. That is a very considerable part, he may be sure.

This fact of moral freedom and moral responsibility is a fact which needs, in these days, to be emphasized. It is a fact that cannot long be kept out of sight. The materialists and the predestinarians endeavour to expel it with their logical pitchforks, but it is back again in full force before they have finished the exorcism. Nevertheless, it is possible that great harm should come to individuals, and, temporarily, to society through

the inculcation of materialistic doctrines. And there is no doubt that the influence of these doctrines upon large classes of ignorant and semi-brutal men has been baneful in the extreme. Much of this materialistic poison has filtered down into the minds of the vicious classes, and has borne its natural fruit in reckless sensuality and shameless crime. It is time to reassert with strenuous earnestness the moral imperative ; to make the world listen once more to that

Stern daughter of the voice of God,

whose word is its highest law.

For this is the august Voice which speaks within our souls. "I ought to do right" means not only that there is a "Universal Standard by which all reality is to be judged," but also that there is One who can and will pronounce just judgment. The intelligence of man demands an intelligent Author of the universe ; the moral nature of man demands a righteous Governor of the universe. "The conscience of man," says Mulford, "presumes the being of God ; it presumes a righteous Being. There can be no adequate

explanation of the facts of conscience that does not imply the being of God and His relation to man." *

This is not the dogma of one narrow creed, it is the universal witness of humanity.

"That Supreme Spirit," wrote Manu, the Hindu, three thousand years ago, "resides in thy bosom continually, and is an all-knowing inspector of thy goodness and thy wickedness."

"The philosopher carries within him an unwritten, but most divine law," wrote Porphyry, the Greek.

"Keep the divine portion of thyself pure," said the good Marcus Aurelius. "Look within. Within is the fountain of good. That is the life; that is the man."

"He who knows himself," testifies Cicero, "must be conscious that he is inspired by a divine principle . . . and he will be careful that his sentiments and behaviour should be worthy of this inestimable gift of God."

* "Republic of God," p. 143.

IV.

WHAT IS THE USE OF PRAYER?

The power of prayer, which is so much taught in Scripture, is, in fact, the power of strong wishes; wishes are prayers, if men believe in God, and if their wishes are formed around His Presence.—J. B. MOZLEY.

The universal Father can change phenomena in compliance with the prayers of men and without a miracle, quite as easily as man can.—MARK HOPKINS.

Prayer is thought, at the beginning, to be a constant, unobjectionable and available instrument for the working of external changes. Later it is seen to be, and to be becoming, more exclusively spiritual in its service. The excellence of nature is felt, and we ask oftenest the power to handle the conditions of our discipline wisely, and to wait patiently upon them. . . . Prayer is not thus less but more to us, even as God is more and in more than hitherto. Prayer may be, under these advanced conditions, less aggressive and importunate at a single point, but it is far more pervasive and penetrative, and meets with a larger sense of acceptance. The natural and the supernatural flow in upon each other, and we need no longer to distinguish them, or to sustain the first by the second.—JOHN BASCOM.

If God exists, it is incredible that the Being so named should not give assurance of Himself to intelligent thought, should not bear witness of Himself in intelligent minds.—F. H. HEDGE.

I cannot contentedly frame a prayer for myself in particular without a catalogue for my friends; nor request a happiness wherein my sociable disposition doth not desire the fellowship of my neighbour. I never hear the toll of a passing-bell, though in my mirth, without my prayers and best wishes for the departing spirit. I cannot go to cure the body of my patient, but I forget my profession and call upon God for his soul. I cannot see one say his prayers, but, instead of imitating him, I fall into supplication for him, who perhaps is no more to me than a common nature.—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

IV.

WHAT IS THE USE OF PRAYER?

“**W**HAT is the Almighty that we should serve Him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?” This is a question that Job puts into the mouth of the wicked of his day—the voice of the unbelief of a very old time. There were men long ago who had no faith in prayer; the superstitious ages were full of scepticism.

The two questions of Job’s sceptics go logically together; the doubt of the efficacy of prayer always springs from doubt in the existence of an intelligent Creator. It is by no means true, however, that it is the wicked alone who are troubled with doubts; some of the purest and most devoted men are overtaken by such painful questionings. Doubt is not always born of depravity. There are mental difficulties in the case, and we may be

sure that God is patient with those who feel them, no matter how intolerant of their uncertainty some men may be. This subject of prayer is one of those that are environed with perplexities, chief of which is the relation of prayer to the uniformities of natural law. "How can our prayers effect any changes in the laws of nature?" is a question that men are prone to ask. How can anything come to us in answer to prayer which would not come to us in the order of Nature? Does not science show us an unbroken continuity of natural phenomena? Does not the doctrine of the conservation of energy explain every change that takes place in the world about us? Where is the room for such an interposition of will as prayer expects?

In endeavouring to answer these questions, let it be borne in mind, at the outset, that we build our argument on the foundations already laid in former discussions. We assume the existence of an intelligent, conscious, personal God, and the doctrine of the freedom of the human will. We believe that man is not a machine, but a self-moving power; we believe that the infinite and eternal Cause of all things

is a Spiritual Being, a free Personality. Starting from these two propositions, which we regard as proved by our previous arguments, we expect to find that all the more serious difficulties concerning prayer have already been met and overcome. On the basis of a materialistic atheism, there is, of course, no room for prayer. If man is a machine and there is nothing in the universe but matter and its laws, then prayer is indeed a delusion and a mockery. But if man's choices do affect his destiny, and if there be above him a Being who loves him, then prayer is not absurd, but sublimely rational.

Prayer is adoration, confession, praise, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession. With respect to some of these worshipful acts, there is not much question. Even the agnostics adore and praise that unknown Cause of all things whose existence they dimly guess. Before the unseen Power from which humanity has proceeded they prostrate themselves with awe and reverence. If they do not make specific confession of sin, they express the humility that best befits the contrite soul; and if they do not give thanks for particular

mercies, they rejoice in the universal bounty. At these forms of prayer they do not cavil. Their trouble arises when supplication and intercession are required ; they demur to those petitions to the Infinite Goodness which implore Him to send us good gifts, or to bestow them on our fellows. But it is only in this sense that prayer is supposed to have any direct efficiency. The theory of prayer is that it sets something in motion which was not before in motion ; and this theory seems to them to conflict with the scientific doctrine of the uniformity of law.

In discussing this question let us be careful to comprehend the true nature of prayer. It is request, not coercion. It is addressed by a free will to a free Will ; and it is assumed, in the petition, that the Person to whom it is addressed may grant it or refuse it. True prayer has no accent of dictation in it, nor any trace of mere teasing persistence. It may cling to the good, it craves and humbly and patiently wait for it ; but it does not think to overcome the unwillingness of the Giver by mere stubbornness or iteration. Many of the common superstitions about

prayer rest on this notion, that the Majesty of Heaven can be coerced, if we only put will power enough into our petitioning. It seems to be believed that a sort of mandamus is put into the hands of men by which they can set the Omnipotent in motion. The prayer of faith is by many persons supposed to be an act of supreme self-will, in which the petitioner determines to have things his own way whether or no. The fact is, that any supplication or intercession which involves these elements of wilfulness is not prayer at all. While you are dictating to God what He shall do, you are not praying. There is no true prayer which is not summed up in these petitions, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done."

It follows from this that all genuine prayer exalts spiritual interests above temporal interests, and universal welfare above individual welfare. The man who wants to be rich more than he wants to be good, and who goes to God in this temper, asking for prosperity, is not praying at all. He asks and receives not, because he asks amiss. Such petitioning mocks the God who has made known to us

most clearly that His supreme choice for us is not material good, but moral and spiritual good. Begging is not always prayer. Whether I pray for myself, or for my child, or for my friend, or for my native land, the deepest and strongest wish must always be, not for material gains or comforts or pleasures, but for the enduring riches of righteousness.

Let it be remembered, in the second place, that the recognition of natural laws is involved in all our praying. A miracle, indeed, in the ordinary acceptation of that word, presupposes a natural law. The orthodox and popular view of a miracle is, that it is a suspension or interruption of a natural law. There could be no miracle, therefore, unless there were natural laws to suspend. If, then, answers to prayer were of the nature of miracles, our prayers would still assume the existence of natural laws. The Bible is full of the recognition of such laws. "The idea," says Professor Fisher, "of the tree yielding fruit after his kind, *whose seed is in itself*, is in the beginning of Genesis; the uniform movement of the tides and of the heavenly bodies, and the regular processes of animal life are the subject

of sublime passages in Job ; the constant procession of Nature in seed time and harvest, in day and night, is recognised throughout the Scriptures. The ascription of natural phenomena to God's agency, and belief in supernatural interpositions, did not exclude a belief, likewise, in natural laws." *

All intelligent theists believe, and always have believed, that God governs the universe by law. That belief is stronger to-day than ever before, but there has been no doubt of the fact in the minds of intelligent worshippers since the days of Moses and of Job. Moreover, we believe that God desires us to know His laws and obey them ; that, therefore, He expects us to depend upon their uniformity and to learn to adjust our conduct to this uniformity. The expectation of miracles, in the ordinary sense of that word, cannot then be entertained by intelligent theists in these days. They know that uniformity in Nature is wiser and more beneficent than irregularity ; their strongest reason for believing in God is not any interruptions of the natural order, but the natural order itself. There may be

* "Faith and Rationalism," p. 134.

Divine interpositions *in* the natural order; but these are *super*-natural, not *anti*-natural. What are called miracles are to them disclosures of the working of a higher law, not breaks in the continuity of Nature.

But what do we mean by natural laws? Let us hear the answer of Professor Fisher: "Law is not a being; it is an abstraction. It is a term for expressing the uniformity of the sequences of Nature. Law is another name for invariable succession. Fire, brought into contact with a certain class of material things, burns; not once or twice, but always. The conditions being the same, the same effect follows. This, we say, is a law. But theism holds not only that law is no agent, but that agency, so far as it belongs to objects in Nature, is dependent upon, and either immediately or ultimately derived from, the Creator and Preserver of Nature. Law signifies His plan of acting, or the plan which the living God ordains for the action of the forces of matter." *

To any one who believes this,—who believes that behind all the forces of Nature there is an

* *Ibid.*, p. 135.

intelligent Will and a free Will, and that what we call the laws of Nature are simply His ways of acting, it is, of course, absurd to say that natural law cannot be modified. The proposition that a free, omnipotent Will can act in no other way than the way in which it does act, is self-contradictory. None but a materialistic atheist will ever deny the impossibility of modifications in the working of natural law. If the Author of the universe is a free Spirit, He is not imprisoned in the uniformities of natural law.

The difficulty which the theist encounters in the solution of this problem is not, then, with respect to the possibility, but rather with respect to the probability of such interferences. He knows that God can modify His ways of working, but he sometimes doubts whether He does or will; and his doubts arise largely from his confidence in the wisdom of the ways in which God uniformly acts.

Two or three considerations may help to resolve these doubts.

1. The uniformities of natural law do not completely express the power of an infinite Spirit. The doctrine of the Divine immanency.

as the philosophers call it, must be supplemented by the doctrine of the Divine transcendency. God is in Nature, and He is also above it. Nature is finite, God is infinite. We look upon the universe and say, "These are parts of His ways," but above and beyond all these manifestations of His power, there are infinite energies still unexpressed and unmanifested. What He may be able to do, through these energies not employed in Nature, who can tell?

2. Without varying the uniformities of natural law, He may by His free power so combine natural laws that they shall produce results that would not otherwise come to pass. We can do as much as this ourselves. We can introduce new movements among natural forces, and bring to pass results that would never have come to pass in the order of Nature—results that the law of the conservation of energy cannot explain. My child comes to me complaining of a sore throat. I examine the case at once and discover the fateful white patches of diphtheria. I happen to know the proper remedies, and prepare them immediately, with my own hand administering

the gargle and the tonic, and the disease is arrested. The disease would have been fatal but for the prompt and thorough application of the remedy, but the child is saved and he lives a long and useful life. Now it was not the order of Nature that saved this child's life. Natural forces working unmodified would have destroyed his life. What saved his life was the introduction into the order of Nature of a new combination of natural forces, the bringing of the remedy, which was one natural force, into contact and combination with the organs and tissues of the child's body, which were other natural forces. By this means the poison was checked in its working, and the normal action of the child's organs and tissues was restored. Natural laws were not set aside or interfered with or interrupted in any way, but natural forces were combined in such a way that the resultant of their working was very different from what it would have been if they had not been so combined. This combination of the natural forces did not originate in the natural forces themselves. The law of the conservation of energy cannot explain this combination. It

originated in my thought. It was a new direction of force, and the new direction of the force was given to the force not by the force itself, but by mind. The new movement thus set on foot in the processes of physical law started outside of physical law. I started it. It started in my mind. My mind, acting through my brain, set my hand in motion, and prepared the proper remedies and administered them. Thus the operations of physical law were modified by a power outside of physical law. This is no singular phenomenon. The power of the human mind is thus continually acting upon the chains of natural causation, and modifying the outcome of natural causes. The whole mighty fabric of industrial art, the whole framework of civilisation, on its material side, is simply the product of this energy. Man is not simply part of the chain of natural causation; he is an independent power, he introduces into this chain of natural causation new beginnings of movement, new directions of force, new combinations of matter, and thus he affects by his free choices the whole course of natural events. Now if man can do this because he is a free intelli-

gence, then it must be possible for God, who is a free Intelligence, to do as much as this. In such operations, whether of man or of God, there is nothing miraculous, nor anything contrary to Nature. The uniformities of law are not violated, they are simply controlled for beneficent purposes.

3. The fundamental reason for all our praying is that unalterable conviction which abides in all our hearts, that the Power behind all Nature is a beneficent Power, that His name is Love. We believe in law; we believe also in love. Law is mighty and far-reaching and pervasive in its workings; but the height and depth and length and breadth of love are infinite. We believe that love is the crowning attribute of that Infinite Power from which the universe proceeds, because we know that love is the crowning glory of the universe itself. If love is supreme in the effect, then love must be supreme in the cause. The great heart of humanity, throbbing with sympathy and tenderness and helpful affection, is not the outcome of a loveless Force. Behind and beneath and above and beyond all law there is love. To this love we make appeal

when law cannot help us. In some way, we know, this love will find a way to help us, not by destroying, but by fulfilling the law.

4. Nevertheless we find certain natural limits which we do not expect to see love overpass. For some things we do not pray. Here is a devout soldier, who lost a leg on Lookout Mountain. He believes in the power of prayer; he prays for many things that would not come to him in the order of Nature; but it never occurs to him to ask for a new leg. Why not? Here is a circle of believing souls, beseeching God that He will spare the life of a friend who is sick unto death. So long as he lives they pray, no matter how unfavourable the symptoms of his malady may be; but when he is dead and buried they cease to pray for his life. Why do they not pray that God will raise him from the dead? Is anything too hard for infinite Power? Is it evidence of faithlessness that they do not ask for this? I do not think so. They recognise that there are practical limitations to the action of the Divine will upon natural laws. They do not believe that these limitations arise out of any inability in God; but there

are certain things which He has the power to do, which, for wise reasons, He does not choose to do, and which intelligent believers never ask Him to do. We know that it is not in His plan, in these days, to work what we call miracles—that is direct and palpable suspensions of natural laws; and therefore we do not ask Him for any such favours. But there are wide realms within which the power of God may act without the working of what we call miracles. When the case is foreclosed, under natural law, we do not ask God to open it. But there are many cases, not foreclosed, in which we may invoke the Divine interposition. I think that there was genuine faith and sound philosophy in the reply of David to his servants: “While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who knoweth whether the Lord will not be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” Who knoweth, indeed, what will be the issue of a case of dangerous sickness? The doctors? They do not know. They do not generally undertake to settle the case. They commonly

leave the door of hope open until death closes it. Sometimes when they try to shut it, it will not stay closed. Many a sick man, doomed by the doctors, is alive and well. This was not the result of a miracle; there were elements in the case that they did not understand. I know a woman of whom the most skilful physicians said with one voice fifteen years ago that she must die; there was no hope for her; it was only a question of a few months—she is now in very comfortable health. When she began to recover, the doctors looked one another in the face and said, “What does this mean? Where is our medical science? There is no such case in the books.” There was no such case before; but there is one now, and they will never be quite so positive again. In fact, medicine is not an exact science and never can be; the physician’s opinion is always a probable opinion; there is always room for doubt and room for hope, because there is always room for some unexpected combination of natural forces; and therefore there is often room for prayer while life lasts, even though there may be no expectation that a miracle will be

wrought in answer to prayer. This vast region in which the forces work unseen by us, is the region in which the Divine Agency may operate in answer to our prayers. Those who do not invoke miracles still find reasons enough for prayer.

“A father,” says Dr. Fisher, “has a given system, certain known principles, for the management of his household. It would be wrong as well as futile to ask him to do something which clashes with the wise and well-understood method under which the affairs of the family are conducted. A child who, perhaps, might properly ask his father to change the hour of dinner, either permanently or on a particular day, might be guilty of disrespect if he were to request that all the meals of the family should take place in the night time. To ask for a new article of furniture is one thing; to ask that the house may be burned down is another. When the head of a household has acquainted his family with the arrangements from which he chooses not to deviate, an enclosure is made within which, in all ordinary circumstances, petitions are out of place.

“Applying the analogy to God in His relation to men, we find certain fixed arrangements in the constitution of man and of the world; and we meet, in the course of events, with certain plain and decisive indications of what the will of God is for the future. No reverent or reasonable man would pray that the sun might rise at midnight, that an apple-tree might bear fruit out-of-doors in mid-winter, that a young child might have at once the mental power and knowledge of a man, or that certain invalids, in the last stages of mortal disease, might recover. There is virtually a declared purpose of God to the contrary, as evident as if it were expressed in words, upon the matter of these petitions. They manifestly call for such a revolution in God’s mode of governing the world as we have no right to look for under the ordinary circumstances of human life.”*

The considerations to which we have now attended make clear to my own mind the relations of prayer to natural law; show that true prayer respects the uniformities of law, and does not ask for their interruption, but

* “Faith and Rationalism,” p. 130.

looks for its answer to come through those acts of free intelligence in directing and combining the movements of natural force which God as well as man is able to perform.

But an objection to prayer is sometimes founded upon the Divine omniscience and the Divine benevolence. "If God knows perfectly my wants and is willing to supply them," one may say, "what is the need of my asking? Will my petitions change His feelings or His purposes?" The answer to this is, that the posture of the mind and heart which is involved in true prayer may be the condition of your receiving the good thing you ask for. Suppose that you are asking for the forgiveness of sin; will you say that if God knows that you need forgiveness and is willing to grant it He can just as well give it to you whether you ask for it or not? You cannot receive it until you are willing to ask for it. Your asking does not change God's feelings or His purposes, but it puts you in a position in which His grace can come to you. Nor is it the mere reflex action of the mind upon itself that takes place in this experience. You are in a dark closet and you can see nothing. You

go out of doors and you can see a multitude of objects. Your vision of these objects is not due to the reflex action of your mind; the objects are realities; the reason why you can see them is that you have put yourself into a position in which vision is possible. In like manner the humility, the contrition, the trust that are involved in prayer put us into a condition in which gifts can come to us that could not have come if we had not prayed.

Take an illustration that goes deeper. Here is a mother praying for the life of her sick child. If she truly prays, she says, in every petition, "Thy will be done." This means that she wishes God's will to be done, not only in her own life but in the life of her child. Perhaps that has not been her deepest thought hitherto. Perhaps she has been coveting for the child riches and honours and pleasures more than the enduring good of high and pure character. Now the child is sick unto death, and she sees, as she never saw before, the true meaning of life. All her thoughts and purposes concerning the future of her child are changed as thus she prays. Now if God is infinitely good, and if He seeks the highest welfare of this child,

it may be that He will grant this mother's request. Hitherto she has been utterly unfit to have the training of the child; in this trial she has gained new fitness. The prayer is the expression of a change in her life that makes her a deeper-hearted and a nobler woman. If God gives her the child it is no sign of any change in *His* feelings or His purposes, but it is the natural answer of His love to *her* changed feelings and purposes.

If God is just and wise and kind He will give praying men very different gifts from those which He bestows on men who do not pray, because they are fitted to receive very different gifts. The habit and the spirit of prayer make a man receptive of spiritual influences, and prepare him to partake of the gifts which God is pleased to bestow. To bestow these gifts on one who is destitute of the spirit and careless as to the habit of prayer would be a manifest impossibility.

This close relation between the spiritual condition of the petitioner and the answers to his prayers may explain, in part, the un-wisdom, not to say impertinence, of the proposition that was made a few years ago to test

the efficacy of prayer by setting aside a certain ward in a hospital and calling on all praying people to offer their petitions for the recovery of the patients in that ward ; then to observe whether the health of those patients improved any faster than that of those in other wards. This would have been, at best, experimental praying—praying at a mark, as it were—which is not prayer at all. The attempts “to test the benevolence of a Ruler or Benefactor—or one thought to be such—by bringing to Him petitions to see whether He would grant them or not,” is neither rational nor reverent. “This experiment,” as has been said, “would be apt to fail of its end if it were tried even upon a man reported to be good and kind. The proper quality of prayer, that it shall be heartfelt petition, offered in good faith, and having no ulterior motive beyond a desire of the good sought, is wanting. The experiment is vitiated from the start by a disregard of the conditions essential to the idea of true prayer.” *

Let us bring this discussion to a practical conclusion by asking a few plain questions

* “Faith and Rationalism,” p. 142.

respecting the uses of prayer. What shall I pray for? is a query that men sometimes propose. Our studies may help us to answer it.

In a general way, the apostle answers this question most wisely and comprehensively. "Be anxious for nothing," he says, "but in everything, with prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." That lays a broad foundation for prayer. Nothing that concerns you is so small that you may not lay it before Him, and ask His counsel and His aid.

Pray for anything that you want, and that your best judgment tells you you may rightfully possess. To pray for that which is evil, or for that to which you know that you have no right, would be an insult to the Being to whom you pray. But anything that you want, and that you soberly think would be good for you, you may ask God for. That is the general rule. But let us be specific.

1. "Shall I pray for health, if I am sick?" Certainly. I ought to desire to be whole and sound, and this request is one that I may rightfully make known unto God. He is not

pleased with suffering; He never chooses it, even as a means of greater good, if the same good can be secured in any other way. I must not, however, forget this—that there is something more to be desired than health, even when I am sick. Health is good, but patience, fortitude, self-control are better. I may pray for health, but I ought to pray more earnestly for strength to bear my suffering, while I must, quietly and bravely. Perhaps this suffering may be necessary to teach me the lesson of patience. I cannot, then, be perfectly sure that He will give me health when I ask for it, but I can be sure that He will give me the grace that I need to bear my sickness in such a way that I shall be made better by it.

2. “ Shall I pray for the recovery of a friend that is sick?” Assuredly. No impulse is diviner than the love that clings to kindred and friends. I cannot tell how the prayer will be answered—possibly by some occult combination of natural forces; possibly by some influence upon the mind of the physician, leading him to choose the right remedy. Infinite love has more resources than I can com-

prehend. In my trouble I fly to that refuge. Yet, even here, I have no right to tease or to dictate. How can I be sure that life in this world is the very best boon that God can give to this child of mine, this friend of mine? Because I love my child, my friend, because I trust the infinite Love, I will not set up my will against the Divine will. So to the mother standing by the cradle that holds her sick child, I say, "Pray that your child may live; tell the All-Compassionate Friend the whole story; pour out your sorrow and your desire before Him, and leave it all with Him. Say, 'I want my baby; it seems to me that I need him; I believe that I can be a better woman if I have him; but God knows best. His will is always a good will, and His will be done.'"

3. "Shall I pray for the abatement of a pestilence, like the yellow fever or the cholera?" Yes. It is an object of desire, and may well be an object of prayer. Doubtless pestilences like these are due to violations of the laws of life, and they are not likely to be abated so long as these laws continue to be violated. But it is certainly wise to pray that those who are studying these plagues should

be Divinely aided in discovering their cause and the means of preventing as well as arresting them.

4. " Shall I pray for rain ? " Certainly, if you are quite sure that you want it to rain. But it may be well to reflect that the Creator knows when the world needs rain better than we do, and that it is much better to leave it all to Him.

5. " Shall I pray for specific directions in worldly affairs ? " Yes. " If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." I have no more doubt that God often aids us in the settlement of perplexing questions than I have that you sometimes help your children with their lessons. On the other hand, I am sure that He sometimes lets us work out these problems of life by the use of our own faculties, because He wants us to exercise our judgment and our patience ; just as you sometimes decline to help your children for the same reason. The only way in which He ever does help us in such matters is by enlightening our judgment. But it is *our* judgment that He enlightens, and it is *our* judgment that we must use. It is *in the use of it* that the Divine aid will come.

6. " Shall I pray for prosperity?" Certainly, if you will always remember that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. Prosperity may be good for you, doubtless you feel pretty sure that it would be; but it is not good for all men; it may not be good for you, your character might be harmed by it. You may ask for it, but as you love your own soul you dare not demand it. Every such petition must end with, " Thy will be done."

7. " Shall I pray in war time for victory over the enemies of my country?" Yes, if you are confident that your country stands for righteousness and justice. The loyal affection that binds you to your native land prompts you to utter this petition; yet the prayer which includes all others is, " Thy kingdom come." The spectacle of men praying on opposite sides in war-time often puzzles the doubter; but the people that pray at home, on both sides, while the armies are fighting in the field, have no right to offer any prayer but this: " Lord, if it please Thee, give our armies victory; nevertheless, not our wills but Thine be done." And if this is their prayer they are

really all praying on one side—that is, on the Lord's side.

8. “Shall I pray for political victories?” Yes, if you belong to a party that is not past praying for.

9. “Shall I pray to be made a true Christian disciple?” No. That prayer is never answered. God never makes any one a Christian disciple. I prayed that prayer for ten years, and it brought me no benefit. I might as well have prayed that the Lord would make me see while I kept my eyes shut, or satisfied my hunger while I refused to eat. By-and-by I discovered that the Lord does not *make* people good, but that He *helps* them to be good, and then I soon found some profit in my prayers.

10. “Finally, what shall I pray for most?” That question cannot be answered in a sentence. Sometimes your strongest desire will fasten upon objects not personal to yourself: upon the welfare of those whom you love; upon the interests of the kingdom of heaven. In all these matters love must be the law of your praying. But so far as your own life is concerned, pray always most earnestly for

this: that you may be aided to know and to do the right. You want to know what is right for you, every day; what pleasures it is right for you to enjoy; what temper it is right for you to cherish; what service it is right for you to render; what decisions it is right for you to make; what words it is right for you to speak; what burdens it is right for you to bear. To know the right more clearly and to do it more thoroughly—this is the power that you ought to pray for most. And this is the thing that God most desires to give, and will most surely give, if you want it and will ask for it. He cannot give it unless you desire it. He will not make you good, but He will help you to be good. When you strive for this and ask for this, you are working along the lines of His eternal purpose, and the answer is certain.

When you pray for any physical or material good, for health or wealth or comfort, you cannot know what His answer will be. He may know that the thing which you crave is not good for you; that the trouble you seek to avert holds in it the very discipline you need. Such prayers you have a right to offer; but the

one petition that includes and concludes them all must be, "Thy will be done."

But when you desire and choose moral and spiritual good, then you know what God's will is; you know that He has no other desire concerning you but that you should be good and true; and you know that when you ask Him to help you in this He will surely do it.

In everything, then, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. The range of prayer is as wide as the range of healthful human desires; the uniformity of Nature is no obstacle to prayer. It is a uniformity which God Himself has established, but it is not a fetter with which He has bound His own loving hands. The heart of the universe is not law, but love. To that shelter betake yourself in the day of your need; in that blessed refuge let your heart make its home.

IS DEATH THE END ?

It does not appear to be suitable to the wisdom that shines through all nature, to suppose that we should see so far, and have our curiosity so much raised concerning the works of God, only to be disappointed in the end.—COLIN MACLAURIN.

From this survey of the great lines of human experience two inferences seem to force themselves upon us: (1) That *everywhere*,—in our conscience, in our physical nature, in the sentiments of associated men,—there are indelible marks of a morally constituted world, moving toward righteous ends; (2) That *nowhere*, within us or out of us, do we find the fulfilment of this idea, but only the incipient and often baffled tentatives for realising it by partial approximation. This is what we should expect to see from the first station of an unfinished system; and it irresistibly suggests to us a justifying and perfect sequel. The vaticinations of our moral nature are thus in harmony with those of the intellectual and spiritual, distinctly reporting to us that we stand in Divine relations which infinitely transcend the limits of our earthly years.—JAMES MARTINEAU.

Any one acquainted with the state of an unborn infant—deriving its sole nutriment, its very existence, from its vascular connection with its mother,—could hardly imagine that its separation from its mother would introduce it to a new and independent life. He would rather conclude that it would perish, like a twig wrenched from its parent limb. So it may be in the separation of the soul from the body. Further, as our latent or dimly groping senses were useless while we were developing in embryo, and then implied this life, so we now have, in rudimentary condition certain powers of reason, imagination and heart which prophesy heaven and eternity; and mysterious intimations ever and anon reach us from a Divine sphere,—

“Like hints and echoes of the world
To spirits folded in the womb.”

—W. R. ALGER.

V.

IS DEATH THE END ?

“**B**E not afraid,” said Jesus, “of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” There is, then, an essential difference between the soul and the body. They are two distinct existences. We always find them living together, in the closest relation; but this relation is not necessary to the life of the soul. Those who kill the body have no power to kill the soul. When the body is destroyed the soul continues to exist. Death is the end of the physical organism, but it is not the end of man. That which thinks and loves does not perish when the body perishes.

Such is the clear utterance of Jesus Christ. The fact that death does not end all was often declared by Him, and always assumed as one of the foundation truths. To those who receive Him as the Word of God this statement

is enough. He that is Himself the Life knows the nature and the laws of life ; He that is the Light of men will not lead us astray on a subject of such vital moment.

Most of those who refuse to admit the highest claims of the Man of Nazareth are ready to confess that He was by far the greatest of all the religious teachers the world has known ; that His insight into the deepest things of life was more profound and His knowledge of the nature of the human soul more complete than any other man of history has exhibited. Those who ascribe to Him qualities so great should take this word of His respecting the future with sincere deference. If it be not the conclusive word, it ought to be a weighty word with them. If there are no positive disproofs of a future life, what Jesus Christ has said about it should have great influence with those who recognise Him as a Master in the lore of the spirit. Certainly we shall all admit, no matter what our religious beliefs may be, that a strong presumption in favour of future existence is created by the testimony of Jesus Christ. Let that presumption have the force that it

is entitled to—no less and no more—as you approach the discussion of this momentous theme.

The first fact that confronts us is the presence of some form of this belief among almost all the peoples. To say that it is universal would be going beyond our warrant, but the indications point that way. "In all the leading nations of the earth," says Mr. Alger, whose "Critical History" is a monument of vast learning, "the doctrine of a future life is a tradition handed down from immemorial antiquity, embalmed in sacred books which are regarded as infallible revelations from God. Of course the thoughtless never think of questioning it; the reverently-pious embrace it; all are educated to receive it."* "The great mass of mankind," say the authors of "The Unseen Universe," in their first sentences, "have always believed in some fashion in the immortality of the soul; but it is certain that we may find disbelievers in this doctrine who yet retain the noble attributes of humanity."

* "Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life,"
p. 40.

I cannot, therefore, quite agree with one statement of Mr. Munger in that masterly essay,* that the idea of immortality "is a late comer into the world." Most true is it, as he tells us, "that men worshipped and propitiated long before they attained to a *clear conception* of a future life." But so did they worship and propitiate long before they had any clear conception of the nature of worship. "The doctrine of personal immortality" does indeed "belong to a later age," the doctrine as we now conceive and define it; but the germ of this doctrine is involved in all these old superstitions. "A forecasting shadow of it," Mr. Munger admits, may have hung over the early races; "a voice not fully articulate may have uttered some syllable of it, and gained at last expression in theories of metempsychosis and visions of Nirvana." For my own part, I do not hesitate to regard all those grotesque forms of belief in the survival of the soul which we find among Bushmen and Feejees, and Kamtschadales and Esquimaux, as well as those more ela-

* "Immortality and Modern Thought," in "The Appeal to Life," p. 247.

borate theories of the Egyptians and the Persians and the Scandinavians, as broken lights of that sublime truth toward which man in all the ages has been groping his way. The fact that the belief in immortality has emerged from such a chaotic mass of superstitions is thought by some to cast discredit upon the belief itself. But such persons do not consider modern chemistry as discredited because it originated in the wild speculations of the alchemists; or regard the truths of astronomy as entitled to no credence because their pedigree can be traced up to the mummeries of the astrologers. A curious kind of evolutionism is this, which rejects the highest form of a doctrine because the lowest is crude and inadequate.

It is true, however, as the authors of "The Unseen Universe" have admitted in the sentences just quoted, that intelligent disbelievers in the doctrine have always existed. And the simple fact that the great majority has believed it is not conclusive evidence that it is true. Beyond a question the number of these doubters has considerably increased during the last twenty-five years. The reasons for this are not far to seek.

The intensity of modern life, which centres in material gains and sensuous pleasures, disqualifies men for thought upon the highest themes. The week-days are crowded with work, the Sundays are disturbed by the noises of the pleasure-seekers; there is little time to reflect upon things unseen and eternal. "In what previous age," cries Mr. Alger, "was maddening rivalry so universal, giggling laughter so pestilent an epidemic, triviality at such a premium, and sublimity at such a discount? But the things to which men really devote themselves dilate to fill the whole field of their vision. They soon come to disbelieve that for which they take no thought and make no sacrifice or investments. The average men of our time—as well those of the educated as those of the labouring classes—do not live for immortality. Therefore their faith in it diminishes." *

The concentration of thought upon physical science is another reason for the growing disbelief in immortality. The progress of the physical sciences within the past half-century

* "Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," p. 725.

has become one of the commonest of marvels, albeit it can never become commonplace, any more than the evolution of the worlds or the march of the systems through space. It is a great work that physical science has done for man, in enlarging his knowledge of the world in which he lives and of the universe of which it is a part; in revealing to him the nature of the body he inhabits; in teaching him how to combine and adapt and utilise the forces of nature so as to solve more easily the problem of subsistence, to perfect his methods of locomotion and communication, to alleviate many of his sufferings, to defend himself against some of his most serious perils, and to surround himself with comfort and beauty. But these investigations into the properties of matter and the physical forces have been pursued with so much enthusiasm that the other side of human nature—the spiritual side—has been almost wholly lost sight of. The great multitude of people who are working away so busily with microscopes and retorts and balances forget that there are any other methods of investigation but their own, any truths that cannot be subjected to their

measurements, any forces that cannot be estimated in foot-pounds. Some of them, indeed, boldly deny that there are or can be any such truths or forces; they assert that there is nothing in the universe but matter and its laws. These are not, it is true, the most learned or the most judicious of the physicists, but they are generally the noisiest. Their loud assertions reverberate through the halls when sensational lecturers assail all sanctities with ribald wit, and they are caught up and repeated in pamphlet and newspaper, until unthinking thousands take *vox* for *veritas* and believe them true. So that when the scientists, as a class, are asked how the matter stands respecting the future life, whether they find in their studies any evidence of it, the wise and thoughtful among them, surprised perhaps by the question, look up from their microscopes for a moment and truly answer, "No; our science gives us no report from that quarter, knowledge we have none;" while the rash and heady among them eagerly vociferate, "It is all a superstition. Science has forever laid that ghost of a hereafter. There is no life after death."

Such being the verdict, it is no marvel that the impression has gone abroad that science has blotted out man's hope of immortality. It is a very erroneous and mischievous impression. Science has done nothing of the kind. Proof of immortality, indeed, science does not furnish. The subject, in its largest relations, is outside of her domain. It is as absurd to go to physical science for evidence of immortality as it would be to ask a chemist to tell you whether a portrait was good art, or a physiologist to determine for you whether your true love was faithful. If any part of man is immortal it is that part of man with which physical science has nothing at all to do.

Physical science has not then proved, and cannot prove, that the soul continues to live after death; but, on the other hand, neither has physical science proved, nor can it prove, that the soul does not continue to exist after death. In spite of the loud voices of those rash and not over-wise physicists to which we have been listening, the great body of the most learned among them unhesitatingly assert that no approximation to such negative proof has ever been offered.

The fundamental question is, of course, the question whether the mind and the body are identical; whether that which we call mind or soul is only a function or affection of the body; whether thought is a physical function just as digestion is. This is what the materialists say. But the greatest names in modern science, by an overwhelming majority, are signed to the verdict that this is not proven.

That the soul and the body dwell in the closest relations is not disputed. That the soul uses the body as its instrument is not doubted. That the soul communicates with the external world, and with other souls, through the organs of the body, is unquestioned. Science has revealed to us, in many ways, the closeness of this connection between the soul and the body. It has shown us that thought is always accompanied by molecular changes in the brain. Always mental action and physical action are simultaneous. With every process of thought, with every expression of emotion, a series of changes in the brain is correlated. These changes in the brain are all reduced in the last analysis to motion. They

are molecular movements. And there is no doubt that whenever my mind thinks there is molecular motion in the tissues of my brain. But the motion in the tissues of my brain is not thought. The mental activity and the spiritual activity occur at the same time, but they are not identical. The mind thinks through the brain, but it is no more my brain that thinks than it is my pen that thinks when I write these words upon the paper.

This, I say, is the clear verdict of modern science. I cannot give you a multitude of names ; I will at least give you those that are representative, and that cannot be suspected of any theological bias :

Mr. Herbert Spencer, who is sometimes supposed to occupy materialistic ground on this question, nevertheless says: "That a unit of feeling has nothing in common with a unit of motion becomes more than ever manifest when we bring the two into juxtaposition." *

Professor Tyndall is much more explicit. "Granted," he says, "that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the

* "Psychology," i., p. 158.

organ, nor, apparently, any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why." "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable." "The problem of the connection of the body and soul is as insoluble as it was in the pre-scientific ages."

"We may succeed," says Professor Ferrier, "in determining the exact nature of the molecular changes which occur in the brain-cells when a sensation is experienced; but this will not bring us one whit nearer the explanation of the ultimate nature of that which constitutes the sensation. The one is objective, and the other subjective; and neither can be expressed in terms of the other. We cannot say that they are identical, or even that the one passes into the other; but only, as Laycock expresses it, that the two are correlated." *

Professor John W. Draper, in his "Physiology," as quoted by Joseph Cook, says: "It

* "Functions of the Brain," p. 255.

is for the physiologist to assert and uphold the doctrine of the oneness, the accountability, and the immortality of the soul, and the great truth that, as there is but one God in the universe, so there is but one spirit in man." "We have established the existence of the intellectual principle as external to the body." *

In the last volume of the "Encyclopedia Britannica" Professor McKendrick says: "No one now doubts that consciousness has an anatomical substratum, but the great problem of the relation between the two is as far from solution as in the days when little or nothing was known of the physiology of the nervous system." †

And, finally, not to multiply quotations, take this strong word from Mr. John Fiske: "The only thing which cerebral physiology tells us, when studied with the aid of molecular physics, is against the materialist so far as it goes. It tells us that, during the present life, though thought and feeling are always manifested in connection with a peculiar form of

* Draper's "Physiology," pp. 24, 286.

† Art. "Physiology," vol. xix., p. 41.

matter, yet by no possibility can thought and feeling be in any sense the products of matter. Nothing could be more unscientific than the famous remark of Cabanis, that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile. It is not even correct to say that thought goes on in the brain. What goes on in the brain is an amazingly complex series of molecular movements, with which thought and feeling are in some way related, not as effects or causes, but as concomitants. So much is clear; but cerebral physiology says nothing about another life. Indeed, why should it? The last place in the world to which I should go for information about a state of things in which thought and feeling can exist in the absence of a cerebrum would be cerebral physiology.

“The materialistic assumption that there is no such state of things, and that the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy.” *

This must suffice. There is no room here for a tithe of the testimony, from the greatest

* “The Destiny of Man,” pp. 109, 110.

scientists and philosophers of the present day, to this effect: that there are no scientific reasons for identifying mind and matter, thought and motion; that, in the words of Lotze, it is, for the present at least, indispensable to science to consider the supersensuous soul as separate from the material body.* For anything that science knows, then, the soul continues to live after the death of the body.

This is negative testimony, but it is not on that account valueless. The impression is widespread that modern science has assailed and demolished the belief in immortality by identifying the soul with the body. It is therefore important to show that modern science has done nothing of the kind, and that the very attempt to do so, in the words of Professor Tyndall, "is absurd, monstrous, and fit only for the intellectual gibbet." But if science cannot deny the separate existence of the soul and its continuance after death, can it give us any help toward the affirmation of this great truth? Some help it can give us. Although, as I have said, it cannot *prove*

* "Microcosmus," pp. 166, 167.

immortality, it does offer us some hints and suggestions that assist us in realising it.

Thus the consciousness of personal identity seems to call for a thinking subject separate from matter. Science shows us that these material structures of ours are in constant flux. We are not the same beings physically for two consecutive moments. Old things are passing away; all things are becoming new. Yet we are conscious that our identity does not change. The knowledge that I am I—that I am the same person who existed yesterday, a year ago, forty years ago—although the particles composing my body have changed many times since the earliest days to which my memory reaches back, is most easily accounted for on the supposition that that which I know as myself is not a body but a spirit.

Besides, the unity of consciousness, as Lotze so clearly shows, forces us to the assumption of an immaterial form of being. The materialist says that the brain thinks; but he does not comprehend his own meaning when he says so. The brain is a combination of elements, a mass of atoms. "Hence," in the words of Pro-

fessor Bowne, "to say that the brain thinks can only mean that the elements think which compose the brain. But which of them? Do they all think? Why, then, is not the ego many instead of one? . . . But if my complete thought is not in each of them, what is meant by attributing a fraction of a thought to each? And how could these fractions be brought together to form a complete thought? The notion baffles comprehension, and still more, construction. But if all the elements do not think, but now one and now another, how does the second know what was going on in the first, so that it can take up the thread of conscious thought just where the other dropped it, and that, too, so deftly that mental continuity is in no way disturbed? How comes there to be any unity in our mental life on this theory?" *

These are hard questions which science asks about our mental states, and they are much more simply and easily answered on the theory that the soul is immortal than on the opposite theory.

There is one more aid which science gives

* "Studies in Theism," pp. 388—9.

us in conceiving of a life beyond this world, and that is supplied by the doctrine of evolution. It is fully elaborated in that noble essay of Mr. Munger's to which I have referred, and I will only try to state it in the merest outline. For substance it is this: Evolution climbing steadily up, through age-long processes, has brought forth man as the crown of the creation. Every step in this progress has been a marvel. From the lowest step up to the highest the distance is so vast, the transformations so wonderful, that our imagination is confounded. Put yourself back, if you can, at any point in the cycles of past time, and try to infer from what you see about you what is coming next. Go back to the æon when the oyster was the highest type of existence on the earth, when the mollusc was master of the creation. Suppose that some one had told you then, that by-and-by fishes would be darting through the water and birds flying through the air; would not the prediction have seemed utterly improbable? Every stage of this wonderful progress would have been hard to conceive beforehand. But the kingdoms of life have been passing through these stages

one after another, and now, at last, man comes forth and takes his place on the earth as the last term of this mighty series; as the ripened fruit of this æonian husbandry. How do we know that man, as we know him, is the final term of the series? How do we know that the ripened fruit of the ages is not itself the seed of a sublimer growth? Who knows that Paul's words may not come true, "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be. . . . It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Science does not know that these words are not the eternal verity, and the whole trend of these secular forces whose operation she shows us—forces that steadily push Life on from one stage of development to another, adding function to function, and faculty to faculty, and strength to strength, and glory to glory, widening the range of its movements, broadening its horizons, refining and spiritualising its organisms—surely make it a little easier for us to believe that just beyond the boundary of sense there may be a nobler realm than ours,

and hierarchies of being stretching on and up to the very throne of the Eternal.

But this is not all. Not only does modern science open up for us a vista through which we catch a gleam of the gates of a city that hath foundations, she also seems in some of her latest outgivings to be hinting at reasons for the life to come more cogent than any that have yet appeared. Science has discovered, says Mr. Munger, "that because man is the end of development he is not wholly in it, the product of a process, and for that very reason cut off from the process." If you build a ship, with great toil and cost, of materials gathered from the four quarters of the earth, you do not leave it when it is finished to rot upon the ways, nor do you batter it to pieces with cannon, or blow it to atoms with dynamite, you knock away the props and let it glide down into its element. Its day is not ended when it is built, it is then only just begun. The shipbuilders are done with it, now the sailors take it. Its old environment of stays and props, by which it was painfully kept in its place, is exchanged for the buoyant waves on which it sails swiftly and proudly away to

far-off shores. The laws and processes under which its construction went on are totally different from those under which its work is done.

“But this,” you say, “is no argument. Man’s products may be wrought in this way, but Nature’s are not.” What then, is birth, but the translation of a living being from one world to another—a translation involving the use of organs never used before, involving new methods of nutrition, and a wholly new manner of life? One process in Nature is finished, and the product is removed to a new environment where the organs, curiously wrought in secret, at once take up their task. Now there are some among our scientists and philosophers who begin to reason in this way about the life of man upon the earth. They say that although he comes forth from Nature, as the result of a long process of evolution, he is evidently emerging, at the end of it, into a different realm. The law of the survival of the fittest has ceased to be the supreme law with him, he is casting off that brute inheritance, he is coming under the sway of humaner and Diviner motives. Some kindred

the lower orders may yet claim with him, but how far he has risen above the highest of them! What an immeasurable gulf there is between their possibilities and his! It is a trick of some atheistic scientists to belittle the difference between animals and men, but the sober truth is spoken by Mr. Fiske when he avers: "It is not too much to say that the difference between man and all other living creatures in respect of teachableness, progressiveness, and individuality of character, surpasses all other differences of kind that are known to exist in the universe." *

It seems not incredible, then, from a scientific point of view, that the destiny of man is not terminated by the close of his earthly career. The product of an age-long process here, he may need another environment in which to use the powers that have been fashioned here. Let Mr. Fiske sum up the argument: "The question, then, is reduced to this: Are man's spiritual qualities, into the production of which all this creative energy has gone, to disappear with the rest? Has all this work been done for nothing? Is

"Destiny of Man," p. 57.

it all ephemeral, all a bubble that bursts, a vision that fades? Are we to regard the Creator's work as like that of a child, who builds houses out of blocks just for the pleasure of knocking them down? For aught that science can tell us it may be so, but I can see no good reason for believing any such thing. On such a view the riddle of the universe becomes a riddle without a meaning. . . . The more thoroughly we comprehend that process of evolution by which things have come to be what they are, the more we are likely to feel that to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual element in man is to rob the whole process of its meaning." *

I have thus endeavoured to set before you the question of immortality as it stands related to modern science. I have shown that science has not one word to say in disproof of immortality, and that it finds in its profoundest researches some intimations of it that come home to the thoughtful mind with great power. But it is not to science, let me reiterate, that we must go for proof of the life to come. Let no man imagine that the

* "The Destiny of Man," pp. 114—116.

meagre indications of this great truth which have come to light in the course of this argument are the most and the best of our grounds for the belief that we shall live hereafter. When science has said her last word, the reasons on which we chiefly rely are yet to be heard. To these I can only allude.

1. One of the familiar indications that the soul and the body are not twain but one is seen in the utter disproportion which often exists between the physical and the mental powers, and especially in the fact that in very many cases the ravages of disease in the body, and the near approach of death itself seem to despoil the soul of none of its vigour. One of the most brilliant men I ever knew—the late Samuel Bowles—performed much the largest and best part of his life-work after his health was shattered. His mind was far keener, far more alert, his mental productivity far greater in the last years of his life than in the years of his physical prime. Mrs. Browning seems to have gained in intellectual power as her bodily strength waned. Doubtless many of us have witnessed the last hours of those whose minds were clear and strong until the moment of

their decease. This is not the rule ; but if in one instance the soul seems undisturbed by the sufferings of the body and keeps its power intact while life is receding from the body, that one instance strongly indicates that the soul may continue to live after the body has crumbled to dust.

2. The fragmentary character of human experience, without this lengthening of the term of life, is another indication that life will be lengthened. We do not easily reconcile the existence of such fragments with the symmetry of creation. The other existences seem to perfect their being ; man, at his best, is furthest from his ideal. The higher he climbs, the loftier rise the summits of knowledge and virtue that lure him on. There is no sign of a term in the growth of the human soul. Can it be possible that death is the end of consciousness ? Is the prospect of indefinite growth in knowledge which opens up so grandly before every thoughtful human being an illusion ? Are these powers of knowing and of loving, that in the greatest and the best men seem to be only just beginning to unfold when death comes, never to reach perfection ?

You pick up a story, and after reading a chapter or two in which you become acquainted with the characters, and begin to be interested in the development of the plot, you come suddenly to an abrupt conclusion. "Where is the rest of the story?" you ask. You are told that there is no more of it. "Why?" you demand; "did the author die before he had completed it?" The answer is that he never intended to write any more than this. You throw the book from you with indignation. "The author is a fool or a trifler," you say; "what is the use of publishing such a meaningless and inconsequent fragment as this?" If there be no hereafter, every man's life is just such a meaningless and inconsequent fragment. If there be no future for men, every man's life is but the introduction to a book that never will be written; the prologue to a drama that never will be acted; the prelude to a symphony that never will be played; the blossoming of a plant that shall never reach fruitage. Our faith in the wholeness and unity of nature discourages such a supposition.

3. The moral imperative within us seems

to ask for its realisation a wider term than human life. The stringency and rigour of its injunctions seem cruel if there be not time for compensations hereafter. Its one word is—Wait! “Put the present pleasure by,” it bids us; “Wait for the enduring good.” If there be no future, this most august voice is the voice of a mocker.

4. The undying sentiment of justice within us demands another life, where the miscreants that here go unwhipped shall get their dues; where the troubled and heavy laden shall find comfort and rest. Some curses there are that are never unsaid, some wrongs that are never undone on this side of the grave. “A babe that suffers from an inherited vice,” says Mr. Munger, “and dies in moral purity, might pass to nothingness, but the injustice could never perish. It would endure—a blot on the white robe of divine righteousness; it would for ever prevent the universe from being a moral order. Were there no God, the wrong would pass into the elements to work eternal discord; it would haunt the ages; for if there is no immortality for the soul, there is immortality for wrong till it is

set right. The martyr dying in the arena while the tyrant jests above him is an eternal injustice, if there be no future."*

5. All the strongest reasons for this faith are summed up in the belief that God exists, and that He is good; and that the universe is the expression of His righteous will. We saw in a previous chapter how firm are the foundations of our faith in God, and the belief in the continuance of the human soul after death is an irresistible inference from the belief in God. For if God is, then, in the largest and fullest sense, what ought to be will be. The good may be compelled to wait. It can afford to wait. The eternal years of God belong to it. Its day will come. The deepest truth that man can know is the truth that this is a moral universe. The foundation of being is righteousness. The ultimate fact is not matter nor force nor substance nor cause, but righteousness. Being in itself is goodness—that is the last word of the most masterful philosophy of this generation. To the wail of pessimism, the penetrating insight and the victorious logic of

* "Freedom of Faith," p. 249.

Lotze and Ulrici return this triumphant answer. And if what ought to be will be, then this question quickly emerges from the mist. If what ought to be will be, then Humanity will fulfil the prophecy of its history, and go on and up to glories that the eye has not seen and cannot see. If what ought to be will be, then the fragment that every man's life so consciously is, will have time and room to complete itself according to its own ideal. If what ought to be will be, then they who obey the inner voice and postpone the present indulgence for the future blessedness will not wait in vain. If what ought to be will be, then every wrong will meet its recompense, and every wound will find its balm. Above all, if what ought to be will be, then all virtuous being, all right and pure and noble character, will continue to be. This is the one unhesitating verdict of our moral nature. We know that the good life, the luminous, inspiring, bountiful life, ought to go on. Respecting the vicious, depraved, noxious life we have no such conviction. But if the very basis of our moral nature is not delusive the good life must go on. We do not say that

immortality is the reward of virtue, any more than we say that colour is the reward of light ; immortality belongs to it ; immortality is the atmosphere in which virtue lives ; virtue is the heir of immortality. As Jean Paul says : “ We desire immortality not as the reward of virtue, but as its continuance. Virtue can no more be rewarded than joy can ; it is its own reward.” And so sings Tennyson, turning the vision of the great German to music in one of his own deathless lyrics :

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,—

Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea ;
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—

Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she :
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death : if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm
and the fly ?

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just ;

To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky ;
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

God is just. He is not mocked, nor is He a mocker. Our deepest faith does not cajole us. Virtue will not be defrauded. To her shall be given the wages that belong to her, the glory of going on.

VI.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

I would beseech you to observe attentively whether nearly every verse in the Old Testament does not exhibit these two apparently opposite and most contradictory feelings; an acknowledgment of God as incomprehensible and infinite; a desire to see, to understand, to comprehend that same God. . . . And if it be a fact, and if this be the one great cry of human nature in all ages, just in proportion as it was enlightened, there cannot any explanation be found for it except only that which will satisfy it. If the Infinite, Incomprehensible Jehovah is manifested in the person of a Man, a Man conversing with us, living among us, entering into all our infirmities and temptations, and passing into all our conditions, it is satisfied; if not, it remains unsatisfied.—FREDERIC DENISON MAURICE.

It is through this humanity in the mind of God, if I may dare to so speak of Deity, that a revelation became possible to man. It was the Word that was made flesh; it was the Word that manifested itself to man. It is in virtue of the connection between God and man that God made man in His own image; that through a long line of prophets the human truth of God could be made known to man, till it came forth developed most entirely and at large in the person of the Redeemer.—FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON.

The thing that man is always requiring is that he shall be explained to himself: tell me what life means, show me God in human life, and I will believe on Him. The Incarnation is the answer to this instinctive demand. Christ is God explaining man, interpreting life, revealing its history and destiny. Hence He is not only in human life, but He teaches in no other way than by its processes. His actual life is the teaching, and His words are only the comments upon it; the words are not the teaching.—THEODORE T. MUNGER.

VI.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

THE questions that we have considered hitherto respect the fundamental truths of all religions—the question whether Thought is the offspring of Force, or Force the offspring of Thought; whether the death of the body is the end of conscious existence; whether there is anything in man but mechanism; whether prayer brings anything to pass. Not all the religions give the same answer to these inquiries; but they are involved in every attempt to explain the relation of man to an unseen world. We come in this chapter to the consideration of the question which is fundamental to Christianity—namely, What ought we to think of the historical Person who is revered as the Founder of Christianity? It is certain that this Person has marvellous power to compel and hold the thoughts of men

For eighteen centuries He has challenged the world's criticism, and the interest of the world in the problem He presents has not begun to abate; never, in all these centuries, has any score of years witnessed such a concentration of thought upon His person and character as that which we have seen in the twenty years just past. More books have been written about Christ during the last generation than in any other generation since men began to write books. The ripest scholarship, the most patient archæological research, have been devoted to the questions connected with His life upon the earth; with the historical and social conditions in which He lived; with His relation to the people in whose history He appeared; with the origin of those biographies in which we trace the story of His words and deeds, and of the institutions which still bear witness of Him. No period of the world's history has had such a flood of light thrown upon it as the first half of the first century of our era. No country of ancient history is so well known to the world as the little strip of upland that lies between the valley of the Jordan and the

eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Jesus Christ called Himself the Light of the World ; certain it is that He has concentrated upon Himself and His times and His land the light of the world's learning. And this impulse, as I have said, is by no means exhausted ; there is absolutely no other subject on which so much is written and printed to-day. It is not, then, a trivial question. "The greatest problems in the field of history," says Dr. Fairbairn, "centre in the Person and Life of Christ. Who He was, what He was, how and why He came to be it, are questions that have not lost and cannot lose their interest for us and for mankind. . . . Jesus Christ is the most powerful spiritual force that ever operated for good on and in humanity. He is to-day what He has been for centuries—an object of reverence and love to the good, the cause of remorse and change, penitence and hope to the bad ; of moral strength to the morally weak, of inspiration to the despondent, consolation to the desolate and cheer to the dying. He has created the typical virtues and moral ambitions of civilised man ; has been to the benevolent a motive to beneficence, to the

selfish a persuasion to self-forgetful obedience; and has become the moral ideal that has steadied and raised, awed and guided youth, braced and ennobled manhood, mellowed and beautified age." * No candid student of history can deny that Jesus Christ has been all this and more to hundreds of millions of the best men in the world's history; and that the number of living human beings to whom He is all this and more is larger to-day than at any period of past time. The Christ of history is a tremendous fact: to put Him aside with a supercilious sneer or patronising compliment amounts to a serious disparagement of any man's intelligence.

Some who do not venture to criticise Him, express their estimate of Him by classing Him —by putting Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mohammed, and Christ into a class together. The people who do this certainly succeed in classing themselves, and not among great thinkers. Surely it does not require any very profound or penetrative judgment to discover that this classification is unscientific. You may class St. Peter's with New England meet-

* "Studies in the Life of Christ," p. 1.

ing-houses, for they are all edifices for religious purposes, you may class the Apollo Belvidere with the images borne on the head of the peripatetic Italian vendor, for they are all works of plastic art ; you may class Pike's Peak with the foot-hills at its base, for they are all elevations of the earth's surface ; but you cannot class Jesus Christ with the founders of religions, because He differs from them not merely in degree but in kind. "Superficial minds," said the First Napoleon, "see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christ and all other religions whatsoever, the distance of infinity ; from the first day to the last He is the same—always the same, majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle. . . . Between Him and whoever else in the world there is no possible term of comparison."* The acutest of the German doubters who have carefully studied Him, do not venture to classify Him. "The mystery," "the unique," they

* Quoted by Farrar, "Witness of History to Christ," pp. 80, 81.

call Him. Strauss, the chief of them, affirms that "He was the Being in whose consciousness the unity of the Divine and of the human was exhibited for the first time with an energy that left but an infinitely small weight to opposing qualities; a Being in this sense unique and peerless in the history of the world."* "When the critics," says Renan, "shall have resolutely placed themselves at this (the scientific) point of view, Jesus will appear to them the most remarkable of all the problems of history, and they will be held excusable who, struck by the depth of the mystery, have proclaimed Him God, for these at least have comprehended if they have not explained Him. . . . Native of a very small district, very exclusive in its nationality, very provincial in thought, He has become the universal ideal. Athens and Rome adopted Him, the Barbarians fell at His feet, and even to-day rationalism does not look at Him closely except on its knees."† When such testimonies fall from the lips of such men, lesser thinkers should be cautious about classifying Jesus.

* Paraphrased by Renan, "Religious History and Criticism," p. 187.

† Ibid., p. 215.

“The difference between the revelation of the Christ and all religions is ultimate,” says Mulford. “There is in the words of the Christ the directory for no penance, nor shrine, nor pilgrimage. There is the pattern for no altar nor temple. The rites that appear in various ways in every historical religion are not recognised. The Christ institutes no cultus of worship, and prescribes no system of dogma. There is no suggestion of form of worship or formula of doctrine. The blessing which He gives is of those who act and suffer in the life of humanity. It is of the gentle, of those who mourn, of those who suffer persecution for righteousness.” *

Jesus was not the founder of a religious system; He was simply the Revelation to men of the Living God, of the Life of God, of the truth concerning their relations to God and the duties growing out of those relations.

The claims of Jesus Christ upon the love and obedience of men are confirmed by many different arguments. His Divine commission is sometimes validated by quoting the mighty works that He wrought; sometimes by point-

* “The Republic of God,” p. 67.

ing to His transcendent character, and sometimes by tracing the effect of His life and work upon the world's history. Each of these lines of argument has a cogency of its own.

The works of healing and blessing that He wrought are, and ought to be, a token of His exalted Being. "He does not," says Dr. Bascom, "allow the physical to build itself up either in independence of, or in opposition to the spiritual. He causes the spiritual to touch and visibly to control the physical."* This is the right relation of the two worlds; and He discloses it to us as a natural incident of His great revelation. Just as the spirit in man controls the body of man, so the Spirit, who is the Author of the universe, controls the universe. He who reveals to us this Spirit ought to reveal to us His perfect mastery of the material universe.

The sublime character of Christ is a still stronger confirmation of His claim upon our loyalty. On this subject the testimony even of those who deny to Him Divine honours is abundant and impressive. Before that majestic Personality the world has always

* "Philosophy of Religion," p. 420.

bowed. The greatness of this character has extorted the most enthusiastic plaudits from the most unwilling praisers. Strauss, the coryphæus of the German infidels, speaks of Jesus as "the highest object we can possibly imagine with respect to religion; the Being without whose presence in the mind perfect piety is impossible;"* and Renan, in a strain of enthusiastic eloquence, cries out: "The Christ—that is the character which comes out in the New Testament—must be unhesitatingly adored; for all sublimity partakes of the Divine, and the Christ of the Gospel is the most beautiful incarnation of God, in the fairest of forms—a noble man. He is really the Son of God and the Son of man—God in man. . . . The Jesus, who is truly admirable, is beyond historical criticism; He has His throne in the conscience; He will never be displaced except by a higher ideal; He is King for a long time yet. What do I say? His beauty is eternal—His reign will never have an end. The Church has been left behind, it has out-

* Quoted by Farrar: "The Witness of History to Christ," p. 80.

grown itself; the Christ has never been outgrown. So long as one noble heart shall aspire to moral beauty, so long as one elevated soul shall tremble with joy before the manifestation of the Divine, the Christ will secure worshippers through the truly immortal part of His being."* It is true that Renan argues that this Christ of the Gospels is an idealised Person, more than a real one; but neither he nor any one else has ever been able to explain how such an ideal could have been constructed and put down on paper in the day when the gospels were written, and by the men who wrote the gospels. The mythical and legendary theories of the gospels have been riddled by recent criticism, and thorough thinking forces us to the conclusion that it is far more rational to suppose that the Jesus whom Renan adores was a real Person than that He was the creation of a generation of myth-makers. "It takes a Newton to forge a Newton," said Theodore Parker. "What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus."† "Who among His followers or among their

* "Religious History and Criticism," pp. 224, 225.

† "Discourses on Religion," pp. 291, 363.

proselytes," asks John Stuart Mill, "was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fisherman of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncracies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source."*

All these are the testimonies of men who have but little sympathy with what is commonly known as orthodox belief; I quote them to show the impression made upon the minds of unbelievers by this transcendent character. One more such testimony, from the historian Lecky, must conclude the evidence under this head. "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not

* "Essays on Religion," pp. 253—254.

only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." *

Such assertions respecting the matchless character of Christ, when placed by the side of the assertions which He made concerning Himself, require me to hold a theory about Him very different from that which is held by the men whose language we have been quoting. If He was all that Renan and Strauss, and Mill and Parker and Lecky say that He was, He must have been more than they admit Him to have been. If He was the exalted, the unique, the unapproachable Man that they say He was, He could not have been an impostor or a crazy enthusiast. And an impostor or a crazy enthusiast He must have been, if, being only a man, He constantly claimed Divine prerogatives and Divine honours, as He certainly did. To eliminate

* "European Morals," pp. 8—9.

these claims from the Gospel narrative is the sheerest impossibility. They are woven through and through it; if we know anything about Jesus Christ, we know that He assumed a higher rank than that of mortal man. His character, as these witnesses describe it, accords perfectly with what He says about Himself; and utterly contradicts the theories of these critics respecting Him. All these theories involve a stupendous moral contradiction. But there is nothing contradictory to my mind—there is rather the strongest probability and the sublimest rationality—in the belief that God has revealed His life to men in the life of a Man. The highest view of Christ's life and character seems to me the simplest and the most credible.

Of all the claims that Jesus made concerning Himself none is more suggestive than that which respects His hold upon the future. Those predictions of His respecting the effect of His life and work upon coming ages could have been made by no one but a fanatic, or by one with Divine prescience. "And I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto Me." "Except a grain of wheat fall into

the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." All these predictions are uttered in a tone of perfect calmness; there is no trace of enthusiasm or visionary imagination. How utterly incredible, to all human appearance, were these words when He spoke them! What was there in His surroundings to make Him think that any such destiny awaited Him? How could those who followed Him to the Prætorium and to Calvary have conceived of such honour as in store for Him? Yet Jesus, at the very hour when the clouds were darkest, spoke thus confidently respecting the kingdom which He should found upon the earth. The fulfilment of this prediction fills eighteen centuries with a steadily-increasing light. Of all the evidences of Christianity none is so cogent, so mighty as Christendom. Here is the phenomenon—Christian civilisation; explain it. Of such a radiant effect what must have been the cause? Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? The stream of benign influences that have flowed from the life and work of Jesus Christ through the centuries, through the nations, across the continents—

did that issue from a source of superstition or fanaticism? I am very well aware that with the historical progress of Christianity many vicious and debasing elements have been blended; that bigotry and cruelty and fanaticism have often worn its white robes, and soiled them grievously. But these effects are due not to the beneficent force at work, but to the intractable material upon which it has been at work. You might as well censure the air for the malarial germs flung upon its viewless currents, or the light for the distortion and discolouration of the medium through which it shines. To infer the character of Christianity, says Dr. Storrs, from the abuses which men have attached to it "would be to repeat the error of those who, according to the fine image of Deutsch, in criticising the Talmud, have mistaken the gargoyles, the grinning stone caricatures mounting their guard over cathedrals, for the gleaming images of saints within. Liberty sometimes runs to license, not because it is bad in itself, but because human passion perverts its principle. Philanthropy sometimes makes men crazy, in spirit and action, if not in mind; not

because the law of charity is in itself evil, but because the unconquered heart of man makes it an excuse for selfishness or ferocity. If Christianity comes, as in its own contemplation it does, to enlighten and rectify the nature of mankind, its proper effects must be wholly separable, in thought and in fact, from the manifestations of that alien and insolent temper which it claims, at least, to have it for its function to restrain and subdue.* Much of the popular cavil about Christianity is based upon a failure to discriminate between the principle itself and the evils with which human nature has often adulterated it. Thus Voltaire, after reckoning on a possible ten million of lives lost in wars or persecutions connected with our faith, cries out: "Christianity, behold thy consequences!" One might as well point to the millions of lives destroyed by intoxicating liquors, and exclaim, "Chemistry, behold thy consequences!" or to the untold crimes and miseries resulting from the excesses of the erotic passion, and ejaculate, "Human love, behold thy consequences!" or to the hundreds of millions slain

* "Divine Origin of Christianity," pp. 26, 27.

in wars of aggression or defence, and cry, "Patriotism, behold thy consequences!"

But when we rid ourselves of such perverse and childish criticism, and study the effects of Christianity upon the world, broadly and historically, we find proofs of its power more cogent and impressive than any that can be gathered in any other field,—proofs that to my mind are simply irresistible. Here, too, it is only the shallow sceptics who venture on comparisons. The work that has been done for the human race by Jesus Christ is as far above that which has been done by the founder of any other religion as His character is loftier than the best of those founders. Max Müller is certainly no bigot, and he knows, probably as well as Mr. Conway or Mr. Ingersoll, what germs of truth and wisdom the other religions contain; yet he bears witness that there is no room for comparison between the best of them and Christianity. "Let us see," he says, "what other nations have had and still have in the place of religion; let us examine the prayers, the worship, the theology, even of the most highly civilised races, the Greeks, the Romans, the Hindus, the Persians—and we

shall then understand more thoroughly what blessings are vouchsafed to us in being permitted to breathe from the first breath of life the pure air of a land of Christian light and knowledge. . . . We have done so little to gain our religion, we have suffered so little in the cause of truth, that however highly we prize our own Christianity, we never prize it highly enough until we have compared it with the other religions of the world. . . . No one who has not examined patiently and honestly the other religions of the world can know what Christianity really is, or can join with such truth and sincerity in the words of St. Paul: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' **

To show, in any adequate way, the historical effects of Christianity would require many volumes. I cannot even glance at the evidence. To point out the changes it has wrought in men's thoughts of God, in their estimate of the dignity of human nature, in their moral standards, in their domestic, political and social relations, in their literature, their art, their jurisprudence, their industrial

* "Chips from a German Workshop," N.Y. Ed., vol. i. pp. 180—181.

life, in expectations of the future, would be a most welcome and inspiring task; but one might as well try to tell the tale of the stars or to photograph a continent. Any thoughtful person who desires to see this historical evidence carefully condensed and summarised would do well to read Mr. Charles L. Brace's "*Gesta Christi*," or Dr. Richard S. Storr's "The Divine Origin of Christianity indicated by its Historical Effects." The man who can carefully weigh that evidence and not be impressed by it must have a different sort of mental apparatus than that which has been vouchsafed to me. Mr. Lecky is no partizan of the Christian Church; but he sums up the philanthropic achievements of Christianity in a notable passage:

"Imperfect and inadequate as is the sketch which I have drawn, it will be sufficient to show how great and multiform have been the influences of Christian philanthropy. The shadows that rest upon the picture I have not concealed; but when all due allowance has been made for them enough will remain to claim our deepest admiration. The high conception that has been formed of the sanctity of

human life, the protection of infancy, the elevation and final emancipation of the slave classes, the suppression of barbarous games, the creation of a vast and multifarious organisation of charity, and the education of the imagination by the Christian type, constitute together a movement of philanthropy *which has never been paralleled or approached in the Pagan world*. The effects of this movement in promoting happiness have been very great. Its effect in determining character has probably been still greater." *

The Power that has wrought all this mighty work for man is the Power that came into the world when Jesus Christ was born. This kingdom of truth and love is the kingdom that He came to establish. "The achievement of Christ," says the author of "Ecce Homo," "in founding by His single will and power a structure so durable and so universal, is like no other achievement which history records. The masterpieces of the men of action are coarse and common in comparison with it, and the masterpieces of speculation flimsy and unsubstantial." † Was He of whom all this can be

* "History of European Morals," ii., p. 100. † Page 354.

truly said, no more than a simple, unlettered, Galilean peasant ?

Not only by the mighty works that He wrought while on the earth, by the transcendent character that He displayed, and by the effects of His life and work manifested on the widening and brightening arena of the world's progress through eighteen centuries does Jesus Christ make good His claim upon our trust and obedience, but also by His revelation to us of the laws of life for the individual and for society. The Evangelist tells us that there was no need that any should testify to him concerning man, for he knew what was in man. The truth is becoming more and more apparent, the older the world grows. The marvellous insight of Jesus into the nature of man, the truth of the principles enunciated by Him respecting the development of human character are only partly discerned by men as yet ; but their divine perfection becomes more manifest as the world grows wiser.

Jesus was the Prince of Life. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. The communication of this life was by communion and fellowship. " Spirit with spirit

can meet," and the sanity of the spirit is contagious. As strength from His body went forth into the bodies of those who drew near to Him, so virtue from His Spirit was imparted to the souls of those who trusted and loved Him. This is the central source of His power, the substance of what men call salvation. It is this spiritual life going forth from Him into the hearts of men, and thus into the life of the world that has filled the world with light and hope and joy. It is this subtle, mystical, mighty influence of His divine life that has been and is the regenerating force in human hearts and human society. This is the meaning that lies deepest in the words that describe Him as "The Prince of Life."

But He was also by eminence the Teacher. Life has its laws; and for the divine life there is a divine philosophy. And the teachings of Jesus, as well as His spiritual energy, prove that He was the Master of this divine philosophy.

Suppose you have a curious and intricate piece of mechanism, which nobody has been able successfully to operate, on which mechanical experts of all countries have tried

their hands, with very unsatisfactory results; the purposes and uses of which none of them seem clearly to understand, while as to the ways in which it should be worked they are hopelessly at loggerheads, so that your attempts to follow their directions respecting it have resulted in getting it badly out of repair. If, now, one comes to your door who says: "I know what this apparatus is, and what it is for, and how to work it," and if he immediately shows you that he has perfect knowledge of it, that he is able to repair the damage that has been done by the bunglers that have been experimenting with it, and to make it operate smoothly and productively, so that what was before a puzzle to your mind and a burden on your hands becomes a source of delight and of benefit, you are not inclined to doubt his word when he tells you that the reason why he understands the machine so perfectly is that he made it himself. The human soul is a very intricate and curious piece of mechanism on which the philosophers and religionists of the world have expended their ingenuity. None of them could tell with confidence what its purpose was, none

of them could show what was the law of its operation. Grave, indeed, were the injuries it had suffered by their experiments upon it. And Jesus Christ has proved to the world that He alone, of all the world's wise men, perfectly understands the nature of the soul, the purpose of the soul, the law of the soul. That is the one decisive fact. That is a statement that can be verified. When we talk about miracles you may question the proof of them ; when we speak of the sinlessness of His character you may assert that it is an idealisation ; when we point to history you may be unable to traverse the field and take in the evidence ; but when we say : " Here is one who knows you through and through, who knows what you are, and what you are not, but ought to be, and what you may be, and how you may live the only life that is worth living ; listen to what He says, do what He bids, and see if it is not true," then you can test His claims for yourself, and know whether or not He is the Lord and Prince of life.

There are a thousand things to say about this, but I must simply put them aside ; there is no time for them. But there is abundant testimony from men of deepest insight and broadest

knowledge that Jesus Christ is the one Teacher of history who knows what life means. "Jesus Christ and His precepts are found," says Matthew Arnold, "to hit the moral experience of mankind; to hit it lastingly; and when doubts are thrown upon their really hitting it, then to come out stronger than ever."* And again, in another place, still more emphatically: "God is the author of righteousness; now Jesus is the Son of God because He gives the method and the secret by which alone righteousness is possible. And that He does give this we can verify again from experience. It is so; try, and you will find it to be so! Try all the ways to righteousness you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it except the way of Jesus, but that this way does bring you to it. . . . Attempt to reach righteousness *by any way except that of Jesus* and you will find out your mistake. This is a thing that can prove itself, if it is so; and it will prove itself, because it is so."†

The law of the soul is the law of society, because man was made for society, and finds true

* "Last Essays," p. 172.

† "Liberalism and Dogma," p. 300.

righteousness and enduring peace only in his relation to society. In the words of Jesus the true social order is defined, and no other Teacher has defined it. Multitudes of them have tried their hands at the business of organising society; but their schemes have come to naught. And it is very true that the law of society as Jesus expounded it has never yet been put in operation, broadly and thoroughly, in the world, or in any nation of the world. Christ's kingdom is here, indeed; and year by year it comes with increasing power; but the kingdoms of this world are as yet only touched and modified by its influence; they are not yet subdued to its gentle and benignant sway. The relation of Christianity to human society is something like the relation of civilisation to some of the American frontier districts. The railroad has traced through the wilderness the path of civilisation; and here and there a promising town has sprung up, and now and then you find a cabin in a clearing, with grains and fruits growing in the fields and flowers springing by the door; but for the most part the country is still primeval forest or virgin prairie. We are sure, how-

ever, that what we see is only the vanguard of the host that is coming; that teeming farms and noisy cities will soon line this thoroughfare. So the Christian law has made a path through the tangled undergrowths of barbarism and selfishness; it has marked out the lines on which the King in His glory is to come to Zion, and it has gathered to itself some beautiful tokens of that kingdom of righteousness and peace which is by-and-by to fill the earth as the waters fill the sea; but the fulness of that kingdom is yet to be brought in.

For long ages militarism, the law of the strongest, ruled in society. It is not quite ended yet, I fear. Christ's law tempered that fierce rule, and brought many beautiful and precious things to pass while it was going on, but it never fully conquered it; it modified it greatly; it helped to bring in the present age in which industrialism has supplanted militarism. There are those who think that industrialism is the final phase of civilisation; that we shall never have anything better than the present system, under which the individual is protected in his rights by the State, and bidden by the law of competition to struggle

and strive for possession and mastery. The State itself, according to this philosophy, is only a contrivance for nicely adjusting the selfish impulses of individuals so that they shall cancel or balance each other; self-interest is the mainspring of political life; the motive forces of government are penalties and spoils. The industrial relations of men rest wholly on self-interest; the unhindered working of this principle will secure the most beneficent results. It is not necessary to say that this is not Christ's law. This is not His way of organising political or industrial society. The political economists and the political philosophers of this nineteenth century have thought that they were wiser than He; that His way of organising society would never work at all. Nevertheless, the law of Christ has tempered the hard rule of industrialism not a little. Few people are quite so bad as our old political economy has told them they ought to be. Few masters buy their labour always in the cheapest market; most of us mix some considerations of justice and charity with our selfishness. The law of Christ keeps repeating itself in our heads, and makes some faint

impression on our hearts. "Look not every man on his own interests, but also on the interests of others," it bids us; and we are sometimes wise enough to obey. Nevertheless this law has gained but slight hold as yet on the consciences of men. Very few people, even in the Christian Church, have any idea that Jesus Christ knows how to organise society. They think that He knows how to get men out of this world to heaven; they are sure that He knows very little about managing things here. When they want instruction about that they go to Signor Machiavelli or Monsieur Bastiat, or Mr. Ricardo, or Professor Sumner.

I wonder if it does not in these days begin to dawn upon the minds of some of them that possibly there may be some mistake about this fine doctrine of *laissez faire*, and unrestricted competition, and all those blessed "economic harmonies" by which selfishness is raised to a beatitude! It verily seems, now and then, as though we were listening to the collapse and the crash of the competitive *régime*; and nobody knows what may be coming after. Standing in the midst of these conflicts and collisions of interest, studying eagerly the con-

ditions of industrial society, desiring to find the causes and the cure of strife and poverty and crime, every day makes it plainer to me that the only adequate remedy is the acceptance of Christ's law, and the reorganisation of industrial society on that basis. This does not forbid self-interest, nor private property, nor private enterprise; but it tempers them with the principle of good-will, with the enthusiasm of humanity. Already it begins to be evident to multitudes that some such modification of the present industrialism is necessary, and they are hastening to make it; I trust it is not too late. Whether this readjustment can now be made in time to save society from the consequences of its long defiance of the righteous law may be doubtful; it may be that industrial feudalism will come to its end in some such catastrophe as that which destroyed political feudalism in the days of the French Revolution. But of this I am certain, that when peace comes to society it will come on the basis of Christ's perfect law. The day is not far off—I know not through what smoke of battle we shall reach it—when the world will see that He who has given to the soul its law has also

given to society its law; and that Matthew Arnold's strong words are just as applicable to the highest good of the community as to that of the individual: "Try all the ways [to peace and welfare] you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it, except the way of Jesus, but that this way does bring you to it."

And now the question comes home to us with tremendous power, Who is this Jesus? Who is this Galilean peasant that looks into the depths of the human soul, and tells all men, with words that are simple and clear and luminous as the daylight, what everybody wanted to know and none of the wise or the mighty could ever tell—just how to live, so that life should be beautiful and bountiful, and glad and free? Who is this that stands within the circle of the hills of little Palestine, in a country whose political and social atmosphere was dense with bigotry and exclusiveness, in a land where there was nothing cosmopolitan, "which prided itself on its ignorance and hatred of the foreigner, where the thought of common brotherhood and kinships could only rise to be cast out and

abhorred,"* and sends His word across the ages, across the continents, saying to men: "Thus and thus you must fashion your societies, your politics; to this pattern you must bring your laws, your industries, your international relations. You will refuse this counsel now; you will fight against it long; but you must come to it at last. This is the law; this is the kingdom; in the latter day it shall stand upon the earth, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Who is it, I say, that thus plants on the further side of twenty centuries a standard of social order, and bids the kings and the captains and the lawgivers and the sages, with all the hosts that follow after, march on, through conflict and failure and the slow discipline of the painful years, until they reach it?

It is none other than He who was named, long years before His coming, "The Wonderful, the Counsellor,"—and of whom it was foretold that the government should be upon His shoulder, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

* Fairbairn, p. 29.

VII.

ARE THE GOSPELS FAIRY TALES?

If people ask us, Where did you get the books which tell you of this Revelation?—we can answer them, Is it a Revelation to you? Does it tell you of yourselves? Does it tell you of Him whom you are feeling after, if haply you may find Him? If it does, you will receive it as God's Revelation of you and of Himself, through whatever hands it comes to you, wherever we found it, whether we are cheats or true men.—FREDERIC DENISON MAURICE.

Let it suffice for me to say that the more I have reflected on it, the more I have been led to believe that the four texts received as canonical bring us very near to the age of the Christ, if not in their last edition, at least in the documents that compose them. Pure products of the Palestinian Christianity, exempt from all Hellenic influences, full of the vivid and frank sentiment of Jerusalem, the gospels are, in my opinion, an immediate echo of the reports of the first Christian generation.—ERNEST RENAN.

Strauss writes about history and myths without appearing to have studied the question; but having heard that some pretended histories were mythical, he borrows this notion as an engine to help him out of Christianity. But the idea of men writing mythic histories between the time of Livy and Tacitus, and of St. Paul mistaking such for realities!—THOMAS ARNOLD.

The myths were generally produced in an age which had no records, no philosophy, no criticism, no canon of belief, and scarcely any tincture of astronomy or geography.—GEORGE GROTE.

VII.

ARE THE GOSPELS FAIRY TALES ?

ST. PETER avers that he and the other apostles did not follow "cunningly-devised fables" when they made known to men "the power and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." It seems, then, that the men who gave us the records containing the Gospel of Jesus Christ were aware of the fact that fabulous stories might be cunningly devised and palmed off on the credulous. Impostures of this sort, more or less skilful, were, as they knew, resorted to in the name of religion. The implication is that some such charge had been brought against them. This charge they emphatically deny. The story that they are telling of Christ's life is not a fabrication. It is a fact. They pledge their honour as men that they are not rehearsing fictions, but testifying to events of which they were witnesses

—eye-witnesses. Peter was the leader of the apostolic band. His opportunities of knowing the facts concerning the life of Christ were unsurpassed. No other man was in closer personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He is not the author of a gospel, but there are two letters of his that are pretty well authenticated documents. In these he assumes, continually, the truth of the narrative contained in the gospels; and in the words which I have quoted he pledges his honour as a witness that the Gospel story is true.

Note two facts that lie upon the surface of this record:

1. The men who bear this testimony were not mere uncritical tale-mongers. They knew something about sifting rumours and testing evidence. The assertion of the text is an indication of this. Much is made in these days of the assumption that the people who gave form to these Gospel records were a credulous, imaginative, unscientific race; that they easily accepted any story that came along, embellished it—perhaps unconsciously—with new imaginings, and passed it on; that thus the wonderful stories of the New Testa-

ment grew into their present form. But this word of Peter is one evidence, at any rate, that those who told this story were aware of the difference between fact and fancy, and that they believed themselves to be witnessing to facts.

2. The doctrinal and ethical writings of these men in our possession do not appear to be the productions of credulous and uncritical men. Certainly these epistles of Peter and James and John and Paul are full of vigorous reasoning, sharp discrimination and sound judgment. I do not think that I shall be accused by any one of exaggeration if I say that no more lucid treatment of the great principles of conduct and the great social laws and forces can be found in any literature of ancient or modern times than are found in the epistles written by the men who were, beyond a question, the companions of our Lord. It is impossible for me to believe that the writers of these epistles were either the conscious fabricators of marvellous tales or the innocent and unsuspecting reporters of such tales fabricated by others.

Yet we are told, in these days, that the

Gospel of Christ, as we have it in the record of the four evangelists, is such a concatenation of marvellous stories. This is the so-called mythical theory of the origin of the Gospel. It is the only theory which now disputes the historic verity of those narrations. It starts with the assumption that the gospels cannot be true, because of the supernatural elements they contain; and then it undertakes to show how they originated. It does not charge that they were consciously invented; it rather holds that they were developed, little by little, out of the heated fancies of a credulous age. The theory is fairly stated in these words of Mr. Row:

“The historic Jesus, during His historic career, had surrounded Himself with a crowd of enthusiastic but very credulous admirers. In the height of their enthusiasm, they formed a succession of creations of the imagination, and then ascribed them to their Master as historical realities. Myth followed myth, in which they invested Him with the various aspects of the Messianic character, as they succeeded in establishing it. . . . One mythologist created a miracle, another put into His mouth a parable, a third invented a discourse. At last

they ventured to portray a Divine and human consciousness united in His Person, and to impart a Divine aspect to the crucified Jesus." *

Such is the mythical theory of the origin of that Gospel story which the world has been believing now these eighteen centuries, and it is flatly asserted by certain belligerent critics that any man who will take pains to examine the evidence will be convinced that the Gospel must have had this origin, and could have had no other; that any candid and competent scholar who will look into the whole subject will be forced to assent to the statement that the Gospel as we have it is a series of fairy-tales, developed by the imagination of an unscientific age and clustering around the Person of a great and good man who lived and died in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago.

The first answer to this strong assertion of the belligerent critic is that it savours of uncharitableness. Certainly there are several men now in the world who have looked into this subject very carefully; who are thoroughly familiar with this mythical theory in all its

* "The Jesus of the Evangelists," p. 196.

phases; who have given years of the most diligent investigation to all the documents; who have attended patiently to every word that the advocates of this destructive theory have to say, and who declare that they are not convinced of its truth; who affirm that they still hold to the substantial historical verity of the New Testament. Now, it is certain that these men are not all ignorant. Nobody will venture to say that. Their scholarship is as thorough and profound as that of those who hold to the mythical theory. Are they dishonest? That is the only alternative which the belligerent critics can suggest. I submit that this judgment is uncharitable. The assumption that the scores of great Christian scholars in America, in England, in Germany who still hold to the substantial historical truths of the four Gospels are all knaves is one that taxes, somewhat, our ordinary faith in human nature.

But these belligerent critics say that the Gospel story cannot be believed, on account of its supernatural elements; and they proceed to show, as I have indicated, how the story was started, how it grew, and how it

came into its present form. On what kind of evidence do they base this theory of theirs? Have they any facts to support it? Very few, I believe. They simply show that other stories have been started and have grown in some such way as this; and then they infer that this one must have originated in the same way. They say that no one who is familiar with the origin of myths can doubt that the Gospel is a mythical story. But this is not proving that the Gospel did originate in this way; it only tends to show that it might have originated in this way.

Now it appears to me, the more I reflect upon it, that even this is by no means evident. I can clearly see how some mythological stories were developed; but when I try to apply the same laws of development to this story I find myself confronted with tremendous difficulties. The mythical theorists protest that they cannot believe the Gospel story because of its inherent improbabilities. I reply that I cannot believe their theory about it because of its inherent improbabilities. Let us see what their theory requires us to believe.

We start with certain facts that are not

denied by any one. That a certain man named Jesus, and called by His disciples the Christ, or the Messiah, was born in Palestine about eighteen hundred and eighty-eight years ago, lived about thirty-three years, and was crucified in Jerusalem on the charge that He was trying to make Himself King is undoubted history.

It is also universally admitted that this Jesus was a great and good man—probably the greatest of all the religious teachers the world has ever known.

It is also beyond dispute that He gathered about Him a number of disciples whom He carefully instructed; and that we have in the New Testament several of the writings of these disciples. Whether the four gospels were written at the time when they claim to have been written, and by the men whose names they bear, is a question in controversy; we do not assume this, therefore; but that the epistles, or most of them, were written by the men whose names they bear, and at the time generally assigned to them—that is, within fifty years of Christ's death—is not disputed. Indeed there are four of these

epistles, and these perhaps the most important ones—the epistle to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians and the one to the Galatians.—that were written, every critic admits, by the Apostle Paul, within twenty-five years after Christ's death. No one pretends to believe that these epistles had a mythical origin; all critics admit that there is just as good reason for believing that Paul wrote them in the form in which we have them, as for believing that Tacitus wrote his Histories and Cæsar his Commentaries. It is the four gospels only, containing the story of the life of Christ, that are supposed to have had a mythical origin.

I have already given you a sketch of the manner in which, as it is supposed, these gospels grew into their present form. They were not exactly manufactured out of whole cloth; they were developed, gradually, by the enthusiastic and credulous followers of Christ, after His death. They were started here and there by highly emotional and imaginative persons; they were repeated from one lip to another, gaining a little at each repetition, until finally the whole Christian community

was full of these stories about the good man whom their credulity had invested with the attributes of Divinity. By-and-by—the theory assumes that it must have been some time during the second century—four men undertook to gather these stories together, and put them in form. The four gospels are the result of this undertaking. They are therefore composed of a mass of popular tales about Jesus, that sprang from the superheated imagination of an ignorant people. These four editors shaped them somewhat, pruned them perhaps of some extravagances, and gave them to the world in their present form.

There is one part of this theory that we must make bold to dispute. The gospels—certainly the first three of them—were reduced to writing and in the hands of the people of the churches at a date much earlier than these critics are willing to allow. Of course it is important to their theory that they put off this date as long as possible, to give room for the myths to grow. But we cannot possibly give them all the time they demand. We have writings of the Church fathers of a very early date, containing quotations from these

gospels. We know that they must have been in existence as early as the year 100. And this, as it seems to us, is a pretty short time for the development of these myths.

Such fabulous creations do not spring into existence suddenly. It takes time to develop them. The interval between the death of Christ and the appearance of these writings is too short for the growth of a Christian mythology. "Unlike something made by the will," says Prof. Fisher, "this must be the fruit of a long brooding over the incidents in the career of Christ and the prophecies relating to Him. We cannot conceive this cloud of myths to arise when the real circumstances in the life of Christ had just occurred, and were fresh in the recollection of those who had known Him. The sharp outlines of fact must first be effaced from memory before the humble career of Jesus could be invested by the imagination with a misty, unreal splendour."*

But this is not the chief difficulty. Look at the writings themselves, and see what they contain. They contain, after all is said, just one thing—a portraiture of a very remark-

* "The Supernatural Origin of Christianity," p. 368.

able personage. And the first point to be noted is that the four gospels set before us the same portrait. The unity of representation is perfect. The Christ of Matthew is the Christ of Mark, and of Luke, and of John. Nothing is said about Him in one of these narratives that is inconsistent with what is said about Him in the others. The Christ stands out from these pages unique, individual, and always the same. There is no mistaking the conception. The gospels were apparently written (or compiled, if you will) by men who occupied very different stand-points; they seem to be intended for different classes of readers; Matthew's gospel appears to be the gospel for Jewish Christians, Luke's for Gentile Christians, Mark's for both, and John's for a special and definite purpose. There is a great deal of diversity both in form and aspect; and yet the person of Christ appears clear and distinct on every page; nothing is blurred or confused in the picture; the unity of presentation is perfect. There are not four Christs. There is but one Christ.

Let us fix our thoughts on some of the particulars in which this striking unity is seen.

1. In all these representations, Jesus appears as one who is both divine and human. Everywhere He asserts and assumes a relation to God that no mere man could think of assuming. He declares that He and the Father are one. He calls Himself the Son of God. He claims the reverence and obedience of men. He declares that all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth. He proclaims Himself Lord and King of the human race. This tremendous self-assertion is the posture in which He always stands. He never says what all the prophets, the holiest men of old, were wont to say, "Thus saith the Lord;" He always says, "I say unto you." He quotes the law of Moses sometimes to approve it, and sometimes to set aside its precepts as no longer binding. His claim of divine honour and power is never relaxed for a moment.

Yet He is always perfectly human. He has all the faculties and feelings of a man; He enters freely into all human experiences; He learns, He labours, He is weary, He rests, He sleeps, He loves, He pities, He weeps, He is indignant, He is compassionate, He is lonely, He is troubled, He is comforted. There is

nothing ghost-like in this portraiture ; the Christ of the Gospel is intensely "human at the red-ripe of the heart." And these two elements, the divine and the human, are so perfectly blended in this character that you cannot tell where the one ends and the other begins, any more than you can draw the line between those operations of your own complex personality that belong to your physical nature and those that belong to your intellectual nature. His divinity is human, and His humanity is divine.

This union of the divine and the human in the person of Christ—the perfect blending of the divine and human—appears in all the evangelists. It has sometimes been supposed that the first three gospels set forth His humanity more clearly, and that the fourth exhibits His divinity ; but there are no assertions of His divinity stronger than some that are peculiar to the first three gospels, and no more intensely human traits than some that appear in the story of John.

2. In every one of these narratives we find also a singular blending of holiness and benevolence. The absolute purity of His character

is always sustained in the representation ; His repugnance to evil of every kind is quick and implacable ; He hates every form of wrong with a perfect hatred ; and yet He is always perfectly unselfish and perfectly benevolent. He hates the sin, but He loves the sinner. "The character of Jesus," says Mr. Row, "is one of the most unselfish benevolence. A spot of selfishness is nowhere to be found in it. It rises to the most absolute height of self-sacrifice. The delicacy with which it is depicted in every action of our Lord's life is complete. It does not consist of a number of outlines placed in bold relief, but in multitudes of the minutest shades. Yet it is interwoven into a character of absolute holiness. A whole galaxy of virtues are combined in the same glorious character. It does not contain one single trait of weakness. Greatness unites in it with humility. Mildness is combined with a zeal which devoured it like a flame of fire. While it presents us with an exhibition of the most untiring patience, Jesus is depicted as capable of anger. The form and outward environment of a servant is combined with the dignity of a king. A divine

consciousness unites with the exhibition of every human feeling in active play. There is no divine or human virtue absent from the character, and each occupies its proper place in subordination to the whole."*

3. All these gospels represent Jesus as a sufferer. His self-sacrifice is the climax of every one of these stories, but the form of their representation is essentially the same in every one of them. The manner in which He meets death; the voluntariness with which He lays down His life; the majesty of the sufferer in the hour of His passion—all this appears with the utmost distinctness in all the four gospels. The four pictures of the suffering Christ are essentially one picture.

4. His teaching, too, is of the same import in all these stories. There are no discrepancies of doctrine or morals. The peculiarity of His teaching is the emphasis which He puts upon faith. This is the one central duty. A personal faith in Himself He declares to be the foundation of all right.

* "The Jesus of the Evangelists," p. 222. The argument of this chapter is largely condensed from this excellent treatise.

character and conduct. In this representation all the gospels are unanimous.

Such are some of the striking traits of the portraiture of this Jesus which we find in the four gospels. Clearly we must admit that it is a very remarkable phenomenon. The figure that rises before us as we look upon these pages is one of marvellous majesty and marvellous sweetness. Nothing more august, nothing more benign, has ever appeared in the horizon of the world's thought than this Christ of the Evangelists.

But the theory we are considering requires us to believe that it is mainly a work of the imagination. Of course, if Christ was what this theory assumed Him to have been, He never claimed divinity; He never assumed to be Lord of men's consciences; He never made faith in Himself the corner-stone of character; He never set Himself forth as a sufferer for the sin of the world. All this has been added by the mythologists. All this is the product of ideality, running wild in an age of credulity. This is not what Jesus was; it is what His fond adherents, after His death, dreamed that He was.

But is it not a little curious that all these people, dreaming and imagining, all over Palestine, should have dreamed and imagined the self-same thing; is it not remarkable that this mild madness which was epidemic should have had so much method in it?

If there had been but four dreamers—four myth-makers—who had set themselves to work to evolve out of their consciousness a superhuman Jesus, it would have been a miracle, I think, if they had all guessed Him out in the same way. Suppose we summon four great novelists and give them the character of some good man, and bid them set their imaginations to work upon the task of greatening him, magnifying him, apotheosizing him, endowing him with superhuman powers and qualities, do you think they would give us four conceptions that would prove to be one conception, so perfectly alike that they could be bound up together in a volume as the story of one life? Can you imagine that the constructive imagination, working by ever so strict laws of art, would produce four creations in this way which should blend into a perfect unity? The supposition is sufficiently preposterous. But

something like this is what our four Evangelists would have done if they had created the portraiture of Christ out of their imagination.

But the case is far more improbable even than this. The Evangelists, we are told, were compilers. They did not fabricate these stories themselves; the stories had grown out of the popular imagination, and were floating about in the common speech of men; they merely picked them up and put them together. This explains at once the similarity and the variety of the Gospel. The writers gathered and compiled oral tales and traditions about the Christ. And there is, doubtless, some truth in this theory of the origin of the gospels. That is to say, the writers of the Gospel did compile narratives that were partly oral and partly written. If these narratives were true reports of words actually spoken, and deeds actually done by Christ, the case presents no difficulty. Verity is always self-consistent. But, upon the supposition we are now considering, the stories collected and reduced to writing by the Evangelists were myths—creations of the popular imagination. It was not *four* men

merely who had been dreaming and imagining ; it was thousands of men. It is the conjectures, the guesses, the fancies of these thousands, gradually evolved out of the brains of a superstitious and enthusiastic sect, that the Evangelists have collected and put together in these narratives. And we are asked to believe that when these fragmentary myths were picked up and placed together, they made the simple, unique, sublime portraiture that we find in the four gospels, with its perfect unity of conception, its perfect symmetry of form, its perfect consistency of detail, its perfect majesty of character.

Now, you may believe that, if you can ; but for me, perhaps because I do not live in a credulous age, I cannot swallow a fairy tale quite so improbable as that. My reason must follow among these speculative possibilities the line of least resistance, and that is not the line of the mythical theory. The idea that the four gospels, with that sublime portraiture of the Divine Man lying upon the face of them, were produced in this way seems to me the very sublimity of improbability.

If some one should show me a head of

Christ in mosaic, very beautiful in its outline and in its shading; a picture so exquisite in its art that it could easily be mistaken for a painting, and should tell me that each one of the multitudinous and many-coloured bits of stone in which the picture is composed was cut and polished by a different hand, and that when they were collected and laid side by side they made this picture, I could believe that quite as easily as I could accept the mythical theory of the origin of the Gospel.

It is easier for me to believe that this Man spoke the living words and did the marvellous deeds here ascribed to Him, and that these words and deeds were faithfully reported by eye and ear witnesses, than to accept the theory which evolves a character like that of Jesus the Christ out of a fortuitous conglomeration of myths.

John Stuart Mill, in one of his Essays on religion, discusses the theory that the character of Christ was produced by the imagination of His followers, and strongly repudiates it. The disciples of Christ could never have conceived such a life, he says, and could never have imagined such doctrines. It is far more

rational to suppose that He lived and spoke as here reported, than that any one alive at that day imagined His character or invented His sayings. Nevertheless, Mill thinks that the supernatural elements in the narrative may have been fabricated. But that, when you think of it, is just as inherently impossible as the theory that His character and doctrines had a mythic origin. It is in these very parts of the narrative, which contain the supernatural elements, that the loftiness of His character and the perfection of His teachings shine out most clearly. The miracles are as much above the conception of that generation as the teachings are. It was here, if anywhere, that the imagination of these men would fail. How could they have conceived the kind of miracles that Jesus wrought? They were a sign-seeking generation. Miracles to them were prodigies. Yet there is not a mere prodigy in the Gospel. There is a benevolent purpose in every one of them. They are not mere exhibitions of power; they are all manifestations of good-will. And they stand in the closest and most vital relation to the teachings. The doctrine often grows

directly out of them, or is illustrated by them. Cancel the miracle, and the word loses its meaning. Moreover, every one of them is an object-lesson in which is set forth the working in the natural world of some great spiritual law. They witness to the descent upon the physical nature of a power superior to it—a power that ought to rule it—that cures its ills and turns its discords to harmony. “Christ’s character and teachings,” says Dr. Bascom, “transcendent as they are, are knit together with a most constant and complete complex and delicate union of the natural and the supernatural ; and we must take them or leave them for what they are in their own inherent consistency.” *

So, then, my friends, I find it easier to believe that the Jesus of the Evangelists was a Divine Man than that He was a myth. The fact that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life, does not seem to me inherently improbable. I find it easy to believe it. It accords with all my highest thoughts of God—with the

* “Philosophy of Religion,” p. 429.

thoughts of Him that shine into my soul with self-witnessing light and power.

And when I study the work that has been done in the world by that Divine Man who claimed to be God's well-beloved Son, I am made to confess that He was, indeed, all that He claimed to be. Christianity itself is the unanswerable argument for Christ's Divinity. The heavenly kingdom of light and love—steadily filling the earth with its glory—bears witness to its king.

We are not, then, following cunningly devised fables or curiously developed myths when we take the old gospels for our guide and bow before the Divine Majesty of Him who was once a Babe in Bethlehem and a Carpenter at Nazareth, and who is now and evermore shall be Prince of Life and Captain of Salvation.

VIII.

WHERE IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD ?

I tell you that all the miseries of England and of other lands consist simply in this, and in nothing else, that we were made in the image of God, made to know Him, to be one with Him in His Son, but will not confess that Son our Lord and Brother, to be the Son of God and Son of Man, the living Head of our race and of each one of us. I tell you that if we would confess Him and lay hold of Him, and let Him enter into and guide us and the world, instead of trying to rule and guide ourselves and the world without Him, we should see and know that the kingdom of God is just as much about us now as it will ever be.—THOMAS HUGHES.

A ray of heavenly light traversing human life, the message of Christ has been broken into a thousand rainbow colours and carried in a thousand directions. It is the historical task of Christianity to assume with every succeeding age a fresh metamorphosis, and to be forever spiritualising more and more her understanding of the Christ and of salvation.—HENRI FREDERIC AMIEL.

The church spire is nothing, after all, but the elevated and prolonged house-roof. And so the battlemented city wall is but the enlargement and solidification of the simple fence that encloses the familiar household. If the idea of Jesus is the constructive power of the Christian Church, it lies no less at the heart of the whole conception of the State as He conceived it.—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

I say not nor believe that Christendom will be Puritanised, or Protestantised; but what is better than either, it will be Christianised. It will settle then into a unity, probably not of form, but of practical assent and love—a commonwealth of the spirit, as much stronger in its unity than the old satrapy of priestly despotism as our republic is stronger than any other government of the world.—HORACE BUSHNELL.

VIII.

WHERE IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

“**S**EEK ye first,” said Jesus, “the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The injunction has become one of the common-places of Christian exhortation. No phrase is more familiar, and no word of Christ is more superficially interpreted. What is the significance or the command as commonly understood? Seeking the kingdom of God, in the popular conception, is seeking to enter heaven. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are identified in the thought; the kingdom of heaven is the heavenly place; seeking it is trying to find and to follow the path that leads to that blessed place. Certainly the desire to find that city and to be meet for that society is one that may well engage our hearts; nevertheless, the fixing of our eyes upon objects that are distant often

shuts from our vision things that are near; and it often happens that those who are always seeking a kingdom beyond the flood never find the kingdom whose green pastures and still waters, whose stately towers and shining palaces and joyful hosts, would be to them, if they should once discover it, a defence and an inspiration.

The fact first to be noted, then, about this kingdom is, that it is not a distant realm. John Baptist's message was, "It is at hand! It is here!" So Christ said always. The kingdom of heaven was always, in His parables and His discourses, a present reality. It is not the language of vision, but the language of description, of narration, in which He places it before us, as one of the familiar facts of life. We are not to be saying, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" as if it were a fitting phantom, tarrying never long in one place, for the kingdom of God is in the midst of us, or within us. Whether the reference be local or spiritual does not greatly alter the meaning; in either case it is not a remote but a present fact. Indeed it is probable that the Greek preposition which our translators have

rendered in the text just quoted by the word "within," and in the marginal reading by the phrase "in the midst of," was designed by our Master to bear this double meaning, and to suggest to us that the kingdom of God is first, within us, a spiritual experience, and then, and therefore, in the midst of us, a social commonwealth. And this will give us a clue to the meaning of the text; we shall be put on the right track in our search for the kingdom.

For we must not overlook the fact that it is to be sought. It does not lie on the surface of events and institutions; it cometh not with observation; it goeth not about the street with drums and banners; it vaunteth not itself. It takes a trained vision and sharpened faculties to discover it. The experienced archæologist will follow you over the pile of earth thrown up by some recent excavation and pick up half-a-dozen precious antiquities where you saw nothing but rubbish; his eye is trained for such search. The practised botanist will spy that rare ranunculus where you saw nothing but a common buttercup; he knows how to look. It is the same with these great

facts of the kingdom of God. In their essence they are spiritual facts, and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. "Unto us God reveals them, through the Spirit," says Paul, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

"The kingdom of God is within you." It is a spiritual kingdom. It is "not meat and drink," says Paul, again, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of God has its seat in the thoughts of men; it rules their wishes, their hopes, their purposes, their impulses, their imaginations. It is not an empire of force, but of freedom; it does not coerce the wills of men by mandates and manacles; it persuades them by the cogency of reason, it draws them by the gentleness of love.

It is a kingdom of the truth. "To this end was I born," said the King Himself, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." But truth can be known as truth only by the reason acting freely, without constraint or intimidation.

The truth that man clearly sees and freely

accepts is the truth that gives him the freedom of the City of God—makes him a citizen of the kingdom. Only where this insight into the truth of God and this joyful recognition of it finds a place, is the kingdom of God established. Men sometimes undertake by violence or censure to propagate the truth on which they suppose that the kingdom of God is founded; they seek to enforce this truth upon the minds of their fellows by persecutions, or by reproaches, or by social pressure; they want to have it understood that those who decline to accept the truth as they understand it must suffer for their unbelief such penalties of disapproval or ostracism as they can inflict; but although these things are done by men in a supposed loyalty to the kingdom of God, they are as far from the kingdom of God as the East is from the West. Every attempt at coercion of any sort, physical or moral, is made in defiance of the laws of the kingdom of God. Any man who tries to cast discredit on his neighbour for heresy; any man who cherishes toward his neighbour an unkind or censorious feeling, because his neighbour's opinions differ from his own, needs to be born

again, for he has not yet seen the kingdom of God. Inasmuch as no man can enter that kingdom who does not go in freely and gladly, it ought to be evident that the attempt to drive people in, or to crowd them in, or to scare them in, is a monstrous blunder.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of law, but the law of that kingdom is the law of love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the organic law of the kingdom of God. When all men shall perfectly obey that law the kingdom will have fully come; just to the extent to which they obey it, it has come. Obedience to this law is the righteousness of the kingdom; perfect obedience is perfect righteousness.

Into those souls, therefore, which with their own reason see the truth of God, with their own hearts rejoice in it, with their own freedom obey His law, and realise His righteousness, and enter into His peace, the kingdom of God has come. Just so far as any soul thus freely obeys the heavenly law and lives the heavenly life is the kingdom of

God established in that soul. Some lives are pervaded and mastered by these divine principles and motives in most of their faculties; the law of the kingdom is the law of their thought and their action, to them the kingdom of God has come with power, rather they have yielded themselves to its power. Over other lives these principles have but feeble sway; only a little space here and there on the frontiers of their thought and desire have submitted to this gracious rule, the wide interior of their choice and purpose is under the flag of another sovereignty.

In some neighbourhoods, in some communities, this law of the kingdom is very dimly understood and very imperfectly obeyed; the rage of passion and appetite, the tyranny of power, the strifes of selfishness, are but slightly mitigated by the unselfish impulses. Love finds some fitful and sporadic expression, but it is not the law of society; the poets praise it in their songs, the preachers glorify it in their rhapsodies, but nobody seems to suppose that it is a workable rule of every-day life for ordinary mortals. The law of might, the law of competition, are

recognised as the organic law. In other societies we see that the heavenly powers are beginning to gain a larger entrance and a firmer hold ; many of the cruel and fierce customs of men are tempered by them ; we discover in their movements, now and then, some signs of the righteousness and peace and holy joy that at length shall fill the whole earth.

Thus we see that the kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of truth, a kingdom of freedom, a kingdom of reason, a kingdom of love—which is identified with no party, no Government, no Church, no organisations of any kind ; which has no local seat, no written legislation, no formal conditions of citizenship ; which makes its way noiselessly and imperceptibly, as the leaven pervades the mass, is here in the earth, widening its domain, strengthening its foundations year by year. “It is expansive,” says Dr. Fairbairn ; “has an extensive, and intensive growth, can have its dominion extended and its authority more perfectly recognised and obeyed. Its real is also its potential being. While it has come, it is

yet always coming; the idea exists, but its realisation is a continuous process."* As yet its possession of the earth is only partial, but the idea on which it is founded is that it is one day to be complete and universal, that the kingdoms of the world are all to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

With these hints respecting the nature of the kingdom of God let us go forth into the earth and seek for it, to see if any signs of its presence and power are anywhere visible.

One clear evidence that presents itself to our vision is the fact that religion is becoming less ritualistic, less dogmatic, less grossly emotional, and at once more spiritual and more ethical.

The fact that less emphasis is put upon mere form, and more upon the inward life, is evident enough to anybody. It is quite true that in some communions, where the forms of worship have been barren and jejune, attempts are made to introduce more variety into the worship, and to afford a larger opportunity for congregational praise and prayer; but this is by no means a ten-

* "Studies in the Life of Christ," p. 106.

dency to ritualism ; it is in the opposite direction. In a ritualistic worship the priest and his acolytes and his choristers perform nearly all the rites ; the congregation look on and admire, if they do not worship. Congregational worship is really incompatible with sacramentarian theology, or with ritualistic ceremonials. The proposition to give the congregation a larger place in the worship is really a movement away from ritualism. If there are, in some of our more stylish city churches, liturgical tendencies that are more formal than this, they are superficial and spasmodic ; they represent no conviction and indicate no tendency. As a matter of fact, the ritualistic churches themselves, as the Roman Catholic and the High Church wing of the Episcopalians, are putting a great deal more of the purely spiritual and ethical elements into their work to-day than they ever did before. The "missions," so called, which are held by these religious bodies, and in which the most pungent and earnest appeals are made to men to break off their sins by righteousness, and commit their ways unto the Lord, are a great and hopeful feature of the religious life of our day.

So far as the Episcopal churches of America are concerned, it would be difficult to hear, in any quarter, more earnest, or more vital preaching than that which these missionaries are making common; and although I am less familiar with the utterances of the Paulist fathers and other such missionaries among the Roman Catholics, I believe that a very important movement is going on among them in the direction not only of improved morality, but of vital piety.

The fact that religion is less dogmatic than once it was; that it lays less stress upon the philosophy of the religious life, and more upon the life itself; that it has practically put aside for ever a good many of the fine distinctions for which men were fighting fifty years ago, is too plain to require demonstration.

The fact that theology is becoming more and more ethical; that it is dropping those dogmas, such as original sin and unconditional election, which confound our moral sense; that it is putting righteousness above sovereignty in its conceptions of God, and making force not the master but the servant of goodness and truth in all its theories, is also

evident. Theology is finding out that the kingdom of God is not simply a kingdom of might or of will, but a kingdom of reason, a kingdom of righteousness.

The fact that character and conduct are of supreme consequence, that theories and creeds, while they may be of great importance, are after all of secondary importance, and that "he that doeth righteousness is righteous" even though his opinions may be erroneous, is certainly more clearly understood to-day than it ever was before. And although there are still large sections of the Church in which more stress is put upon emotional experiences than upon Christian conduct, yet even in these quarters the inadequateness of a merely sentimental religion is beginning to be obvious.

Closely connected with this increasing conviction of the value of character is the growth of toleration. Intolerance is due to a lack of faith in truth. The notion seems to be that the truth cannot win supremacy over the lives of men by its own inherent power, that it must be thrust upon them, and that they must be subjected to censure or persecution if they do not receive it. The

kingdom of God, as we have seen, rests upon the entire moral freedom of man, and insists that he must know the truth for himself before the truth can make him free. The growing willingness to give men the truth, and to concede to them freedom in the use of it, is a sign of the progress of the kingdom of God. Unhappy consequences sometimes follow, when men who have been kept under duress in their thinking suddenly come into a liberty for which they have had no training; but the remedy of that disorder, as Dr. Bascom wisely says, "must ultimately be more truth, and more freedom in its use. Freedom cures freedom. Restraint that is first a rule and then a barrier must ere long be broken down." *

But the most shining evidences of the presence of the kingdom of God in the world are seen in the increase of love as a practical power in human society. How much there is yet remaining of hate and spite and cruelty and greed I need not stop to say, but the wonderful growth of benevolence, as a sentiment and as a motive, is the one notable

* "Words of Christ," p. 69.

phenomenon of the age. The law that bids us love our neighbours as ourselves is still very imperfectly obeyed, but how much wider is the sweep of its authority and how much more beautiful are the fruits of its empire to-day than ever before! Compassion—how wonderfully has that sentiment extended its gracious influence; mitigating the horrors of war, ministering to the needs of the sick and the poor, of outcasts and orphans and prisoners! We are learning to obey Christ's law according to His own definition of its terms, which teaches us that our nearest neighbours are those that are neediest, no matter where they may dwell nor to what race they may belong. The hospitals, the asylums, the homes where the feebleness of age and the feebleness of infancy find shelter, the bands of ministering angels that search out the sick and the wretched to give them succour and comfort, the vigilant eyes and tender hearts that protect even the dumb animals from cruelty and suffering—what a grand outworking is all this of the spirit of compassion in the hearts of men! Even the State, though its empire still rests on force rather than love, is so

pervaded by the universal sentiment that it makes large provision out of its revenues for the unfortunate and helpless classes, to open for them the doors of learning and of well-being. Still more striking is the great enterprise of Christian missions that sends forth its teachers and its physicians into all the benighted lands of earth to heal the sick and comfort the sorrowful and kindle in these hapless souls the great hopes of the Gospel.

But love is proving its power not only as a sentiment and a habit of compassion for the needy and the suffering, but also as a principle of good-will among equals. This is a later and less conspicuous manifestation of its power; it is not yet so evident as it will be by-and-by that love is the organic law of all forms of society; but that idea is beginning to dawn upon the world, and there are those now alive who will see the sun-rising and rejoice in the new day. The truth that "Each for all and all for each" is the only basis on which society can rest peaceably and prosperously is slowly gaining entrance to the minds of men. "Every man for himself" has been the foundation of the social order hitherto, but it

is a rotten foundation, as the world begins to perceive. Self-love is a great force; human welfare cannot dispense with it; but it is not sufficient of itself for the construction of society, it must be coupled with benevolence or there will be chronic strife and disorder. The one clearest sign now visible of the coming of the kingdom of God is the increasing recognition of the fact that good-will must be an integral element of the social order. Not long ago, in one of our leading periodicals, one of our leading economists made this affirmation: "The only things which really tell on the welfare of man on earth are hard work and self-denial, and these tell most when they are brought to bear directly upon the effort to earn an honest living, to accumulate capital, to bring up a family of children to be industrious and self-denying in their turn." The writer explains that what he means by self-denial is simply saving money to be used as capital; hard work and economy, he says, are the only things that tell upon the welfare of man. If every man works hard and saves all he can, the whole world will be peaceful and happy. Doubtless hard work

and economy are both great virtues; if they were duly practised by all men many evils that now trouble us would disappear; but if these were the only virtues cultivated by man, it would be a desolate world to live in. Industry and frugality are purely egoistic virtues; a society in which egoism is the supreme law is a society in which I pray God that I may never live. The doctrine which bids every man look out for his own interest exclusively, and have no care for the welfare of his fellow-men is certainly not preparing the way for the coming of the kingdom of God. The fact that this doctrine of unmitigated selfishness so long proclaimed begins to lose its power over the minds of men, and to seem to them, as it is, an unnatural and heathenish doctrine, is an evidence that the kingdom of God is slowly advancing. Here are words spoken by a leading merchant of Chicago, at a banquet of merchants: "The concession demanded of wealth by democracy—a concession that will answer the demands of progress as well—will be the frank acknowledgment of a moral trusteeship, of a moral obligation to freely use surplus wealth for the general good. Happy

the necessity, beneficent the tyranny," cries this Western merchant, "that will thus rule wealth and trade to their own glorious enfranchisement. When such an acknowledgment is generally made, wealth and trade shall be lifted up to the level of the highest and the best." This trader seems to have got possession of the idea that something else is needed for the protection of human welfare besides working hard and saving all you can—that there is "a moral obligation to freely use surplus wealth for the general good." The advent of this idea marks a stage in the progress of the kingdom of God.

For many a year men's talk has all been of rights: the rights of citizenship, the rights of women, the rights of labour, the rights of capital; and the assertion of rights and the contention for rights has kept the world in a constant state of agitation. The highest expression of the popular religion has been that which is borne as a legend on the national arms of Great Britain, under the figures of rampant lions and fighting unicorns—" *Dieu et mon droit*,"—"God and my right." The state of society in which the highest religious duty

is to stand up for one's own rights is not apt to be millennial.

A little newspaper has flown across the ocean to my hand, sped by some unknown correspondent. It is the organ of the "*Famillière*" of Guise—a great co-operative society in which four hundred and fifty families of workmen are banded together in the pursuits of peaceful industry, living in a magnificent building, which is named, and rightly, the *Palais Social*, and, under the direction of their great-hearted employer, M. Godin, building up a grand industrial commonwealth, all of which, at the present rate, will be their own property within five years. And what is the name of this little newspaper? Doubtless the idea which has shaped that noble organisation is likely to be expressed in its organ. They call it "*Le Devoir*"—*Duty*. That is the master-word of the enterprise—of the civilisation of which it is the herald. "Christ and my Duty!" not "God and my Right!" This is the word that I seem to hear, above all the strife and fury of these stormy days—a word at whose bidding, when once it is clearly spoken, the angry waves of social strife will

sink to a great calm. When duties shall be co-ordinate with rights in the thoughts of men ; when they begin to be as zealous in finding their duties and in discharging their duties as in asserting their rights and defending their rights, the kingdom of God will have fully come.

The signs to which I have pointed are surely visible. Religion is steadily becoming more spiritual and more ethical, less formal, less dogmatic, less crudely emotional ; theology is more moral and less materialistic in its conceptions than once it was ; liberty and toleration are taking the place of bigotry and tyranny ; character and conduct are exalted above opinion and theory ; and love as compassion, and love as good-will is slowly but steadily gaining upon cruelty and strife. What is the meaning of all this ? What is the explanation of this notable and beautiful phenomenon ? What is the cause of this wonderful effect ? To my own mind this increasing spirituality, this exaltation of reason above force, this prevalence of good-will over selfishness, is clear evidence that there is some other Power in the universe besides matter

and its laws; that the Unknown Cause of the universe is Himself a Spirit, whose Word is perfect truth, whose nature is perfect righteousness, whose law is perfect love. This kingdom that we find, here on the earth, steadily widening its borders and strengthening its dominion; growing as the dawn grows toward the perfect day that is not yet; coming as the summer comes, from the time when the first bluebird chirps upon the paling and the first greenness glints through the dead-brown grasses on the sunny bank, to "the high tide of the year" when the roses of June are blowing and the birds are singing full chorus—this kingdom is itself a mighty witness of a Power that makes for righteousness, of a God whose name is Love.

And there is one striking truth connected with this kingdom which must challenge the attention of every thinking man. That is the truth that the signs to which I have pointed are visible only in those parts of the world where Jesus Christ is known and loved as Master and Lord. Where else in all the world do you find this growing spirituality, his uplifting of moral standards, this broaden-

ing liberty, this enlarging love, except in those countries where the name of Jesus is honoured and His words are treasured as words of spirit and life? This kingdom of God, as we have described it, can be traced as directly to Jesus: Christ as the St. Lawrence River can be traced to its source in the mighty inland sea.

And this is precisely what He claimed for Himself. He said that He was a King. Christ was the title that He assumed; Christ is Greek for Messiah; the Jews were waiting for a Messiah, and Messiah is Hebrew for king. That was the name by which He called Himself. John Baptist announced Him as the coming King; in the Prætorium He told Pilate that He was a king, but that His kingdom was not after the manner of this world, that it was a kingdom of the truth; and Pilate in mockery, for a gibe at the Jews, put above His cross the inscription: "This is the King of the Jews." Certain it is that the establishment in the world of just such a kingdom as we have found in the world was precisely what Jesus Christ said that He had come to do; and that the way in which it is growing is exactly the way in

which He said that it would grow. Certain it is that into His Person, while He was on the earth, were gathered these very elements of which we have found this kingdom to consist—perfect spirituality, perfect reasonableness, perfect righteousness, perfect love. The words of Christ are the law of this kingdom; the spirit of Christ is the life of this kingdom.

What things are possible with God it is not becoming in us to declare; but it is possible that the Infinite Love could never have found its way to human hearts if it had not thus been translated into the lives of humanity; that the kingdom of God could never have been established on the earth if there had not come to earth One who, though in the form of God, was made in the likeness of men.

To those readers who have patiently followed these discussions to their close, let me say a parting word. We have been studying the deepest truths with which the human mind can deal. All the paths that we have

been following lead out into the Infinite ; all the powers with which we have been grappling defy the measurements of sense. It has not always been easy, handling realities so vast, to make the truth, in the condensed expression which must here be given to it, so luminous as could have been wished, but I trust that the argument has generally been intelligible. Has it not been reasonably conclusive? Upon questions like these mathematical proof is not possible ; all that we can have is a rational probability, a moral certainty. Has not that kind of evidence been furnished? Has it not appeared, in the course of these discussions, that we are not following cunningly-devised fables or vapoury imaginations, but that our Christian faith rests on a solid foundation? Is it not clear that the cavils and denials with which materialistic atheism assails the great truths of religion are puerile and baseless? Have we not found ample reasons for believing that Thought and Love are the heart of the Universe ; that man is something more than a machine ; that the death of the body is not the end of conscious being ; that prayer takes hold of the Arm that moves the world ; that

Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to men; that the Gospels are not fairy tales; that the kingdom which Christ has established in the earth is a universal and everlasting kingdom?

The central truths of the Christian religion stand as firmly to-day as ever they stood. Criticism has demolished some of the cumbersome and obstructive outworks of our theology; it was a good service, and ought to be frankly acknowledged; but the assaults of destructive criticism upon the citadel of our faith have been impotent. The things that can be shaken are disappearing; let them go! The things that cannot be shaken will remain. Science can neither confute nor demonstrate the first truths of religion; but science has made these truths more probable than once they were; by a thousand paths she leads us toward them, and bids us trust where we can no longer see.

"Man's conception of the Divine," says one* who bears a great name not unworthily, "changes with the changing light of knowledge, as his thoughts are narrowed or widened

* Rev. Charles Shakespeare, "St. Paul at Athens," p. 133.

in the circles of the suns; but his sense of some Divine Thing, in which he 'lives and moves and has his being,' cannot be swept away by any incoming flow of new ideas about the order through which the Infinite Power is manifested. The new ideas may for a season eclipse the faith, but it is only for a season, and faith reasserts itself in the world of new ideas."

Let us be ready for new adjustments, then, in our Christian theories; let us be prepared to revise our philosophy of revelation, of redemption, of retribution; but let us not fear that the central facts of Christianity will be discredited, or that the faith which has wrought so mightily in the elevation of the race will be numbered with the delusions of the dead centuries.

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